



# MISSION FRONTIERS

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Empowering the Great Commission Community of North America



# Editorial Comment



## Moving From Attracting Spectators to Equipping Disciple-Makers

Rick Wood, Editor, *Mission Frontiers*

Some readers may ask, “Why all this talk about how to do church? I thought this was a missions magazine? As we bring the gospel to the unreached peoples, an essential question is what type of church and ministry we will establish among them. Will they be churches that reproduce themselves rapidly by effectively equipping all believers to be disciple-makers so that entire peoples are rapidly discipled? Or will we bring some of the failed models from the West where churches rarely reproduce themselves and few believers are equipped to be disciple-makers or church planters. The kind of churches we plant will also determine whether or not they will in turn send out missionaries.

Like it or not, how we do church in North America does affect the kind of churches that are being planted among the unreached peoples. Our global workers from the West generally plant the same kind of church they have experienced back home. But back home few regularly disciple others and only 19% hold to sound doctrine.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, many non-Western church planters also look to the West for how to do church and may also get their funding from the West. Often they think that bigger is better and that big churches must be doing things right to have grown so big.

There are a few large churches in the West such as Real Life Ministries, which we featured in our Jan.-Feb. 2011 issue, that are effectively equipping believers to be disciple-makers, but these are indeed the exception rather than the rule. As a result, most of the churches that have been established around the world, both large and small, are based on the traditional Western

model which attempts to attract people to come to their church through various events, programs, speakers and music etc. Such churches select pastors based on how well they can “draw” people to their church, not on how well they can equip believers to be disciple-makers.

So the popular North American model of doing church is not just a U.S or Western church problem. It is a global problem—with huge implications for the effective spread of the gospel to every tribe and tongue. If all we do as mission mobilizers is to raise-up more workers to carry forth a failed Western model of “doing church” to every tribe and tongue, then we will have accomplished nothing of lasting impact.

If I could say one thing to church planters around the world, it would be this, “Please do not follow our popular Western example of how to do church.” We have failed miserably to equip the people in our churches to be disciple-makers and church planters. We have failed miserably to instill in believers the biblical vision of the Great Commission. There are far better church planting models to follow—a number of which are presented in this issue. Rather, let us in the West learn how to do church from the great movements which God is initiating around the world so that all believers everywhere will be equipped for the work of ministry.

The most popular model of church in the West focuses on the Sunday morning sermon and attracting large numbers of people to be spectators at the performance of the pastor and worship leaders in very expensive buildings. This model has been largely successful in raising money to pay pastors, build church buildings and initiate programs

that attract people to the church but has not equipped most believers to grow to spiritual maturity where they can fulfill their intended role as disciple-makers. One famous church illustrates this point.

### One Megachurch Gets “Earth-Shaking Wake-Up Call”

A few years ago in 2007, Pastor Bill Hybels of Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago publically repented of the way that they had been doing church. They had spent 30 years creating an elaborate array of programs costing millions of dollars to attract people to participate in their church. At the same time they encouraged other churches to follow their example. They did a multi-year study of their ministry to find out what ministries were actually helping people mature spiritually. Hybels called the findings “earth shaking,” “ground breaking,” “mind blowing,” and “the wake-up call” of his adult life. Hybels summarized the finding of the study this way, “Some of the stuff that we have put millions of dollars into thinking it would really help our people grow and develop spiritually, when the data actually came back, it wasn’t helping people that much.”<sup>2</sup>

Hybels confessed, “We made a mistake. What we should have done when people crossed the line of faith and became Christians, we should have started telling people and teaching people that they have to take responsibility to become “self feeders.” We should have gotten people, taught people how to read their Bible between services, how to do the spiritual practices much more aggressively on their own.”<sup>3</sup>

They had made their people spiritually passive and dependent upon their

**"Our dream is that we fundamentally change the way we do church. That we take out a clean sheet of paper and we rethink all of our old assumptions..."**

million-dollar programs and their paid, professional staff. In the process, they had not equipped their people to feed themselves spiritually, not to mention to disciple others or plant new churches.

While Willow Creek is an extreme example, it is typical of the "attractional model" of doing church used by most churches around the world. With the attractional model, the focus is on getting people *to come* to the events and programs at the church not on equipping believers *to go* to the lost where they live. The believer becomes a passive spectator and a consumer of the services of the church and its paid, professional leaders, not an equipped minister of the gospel who is able to make disciples or plant churches. See the article by Mike Breen starting on page 27. Because this model fosters dependency, it also fails to equip believers to take ownership of the mission of the church both locally and globally. Could this be why so few

believers are interested in reaching the unreached peoples?

According to Greg Hawkins, executive pastor of Willow Creek, "Our dream is that we fundamentally change the way we do church. That we take out a clean sheet of paper and we rethink all of our old assumptions. Replace it with new insights. Insights that are informed by research and rooted in Scripture. Our dream is really to discover what God is doing and how he's asking us to transform this planet."<sup>4</sup>

### **Rethinking Our Assumptions**

That is what this issue is all about—fundamentally changing the way we think about church and the way we carry out its mission because what we are currently doing in most churches is not effective in equipping believers for the work of ministry. All of us need to rethink all of our assumptions about what church is suppose to be and focus on discovering

the principles and practices that God uses to make disciples, and create Church-Planting Movements that build His kingdom. If most pastors continue to focus on growing their existing church attendance rather than on building God's kingdom by equipping their people to be disciple-makers, then we will continue to get the stagnant results we currently see in the Western church. The goal of the Church must be that every believer is involved in ministry and that every believer is trained and equipped to be a disciple-maker or church planter. If the people in your church are not trained to make disciples who can make disciples, then I suggest you read this issue carefully and see what changes you need to make.

1. Barna Survey Examines Changes in Worldview Among Christians over the Past 13 Years, March 6, 2009, The Barna Group of Ventura, CA, [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org)
2. Willow Creek Repents? Why the most influential church in America now says, "We made a mistake.", URL Scaramanga, October 18, 2007, Discipleship Journal's Out of Ur. The intersection of ministry and culture. *Christianity Today*. [http://www.outofur.com/archives/2007/10/willow\\_creek\\_re.html](http://www.outofur.com/archives/2007/10/willow_creek_re.html)
3. Ibid
4. Ibid



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RICK WOOD | Editor, *Mission Frontiers Magazine*



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# GETTING KINGDOM TO GET CHURCH RIGHT

STEVE SMITH

**W**hat comes to your mind when you hear about a movement of God in which almost 200 churches were started within three years in a remote people group?

What comes to your mind when you hear about a movement of God in which 150,000 urban and rural churches were started in a ten year span?<sup>1</sup>

Incredulity may be your first response, perhaps followed by suspicion or excitement. Yet Church-Planting Movements (CPMs) like these are spreading around the world in all types of cultures and religious worldviews. In these movements, successive generations of disciples and churches move consistently past the 4<sup>th</sup> generation in a short duration of time.

These movements sound foreign to many of us who have lived in more traditional churches where the kingdom has been established for centuries. But CPM-like movements are not simply a modern phenomenon. They have characterized the kingdom of God from Acts onward throughout church history.

Both Scripture and church history demonstrate that our Father wants such movements to be the norm when the Lord's Prayer is fulfilled: "May your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven!"

## Get Kingdom Right to get Church Right

As disciples throughout history have made it their priority to see the kingdom explode among lost populations, they have often seen churches multiply rapidly generation by

generation through ordinary new believers. Unfortunately, as churches become established, a tendency emerges to consolidate efforts and focus more on the church development than on kingdom expansion. Which priority is right? Kingdom first or church first? Both are important, but to get church right, we must get kingdom right.

## Gospels: The Priority of the Kingdom

Jesus' entire ministry was focused on initiating the kingdom of God. He used the word "kingdom" over 100 times, while He used the word "church" only twice. His first words in Mark were about the kingdom:

The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel. (Mark 1:15, NASB)

The word "repent" means to change your whole way of thinking. The present tense signifies a continuous action—"keep on changing your whole way of thinking." Jesus was launching a kingdom so radical in nature that we must realign our whole concept of what God wants to do in and through us, especially in how He will do it. This includes how we live as church.

Jesus' central prayer was about the kingdom:

<sup>9</sup>Pray, then, in this way:

"Our Father who is in heaven,  
Hallowed be Your name.

<sup>10</sup>Your kingdom come

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven." (Matt. 6:9-10, NASB)

Jesus taught us to pray that our city, neighborhood, nation or people group will so reflect his glory and reign that it is like heaven on earth. *Does Jesus ask us to pray for something that He doesn't intend to fulfill?* God is not satisfied with a handful of believers, small groups or churches in a people group or city. His vision is for a *multitude* of people worshipping Him from every people group.

*Steve Smith oversees the work of the International Mission Board (SBC) for Southeast Asia and coaches churches and organizations on moving toward biblical church planting movements. He is the author of the book **T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution** with Ying Kai (WigTake Resources 2011). You may contact Steve at: [T4T@pobox.com](mailto:T4T@pobox.com)*

Jesus' central mission was about the kingdom:

This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Matt. 24:14, NASB)

Everything in history is moving toward this final destination.

His final teaching in Acts was about the kingdom:

To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:3, NASB)

Jesus' first, central and last words were about establishing the reign of the King. They summed up His life mission. His mission must be our mission.

From the beginning to the end of Jesus' ministry His focus, both personally and through His disciples, was on the King's reign.

Jesus knew that if we could get the kingdom (King-reign) right, we would get church right.

### **Romans to Revelation: A Balanced Approach and a Caution**

The word "church" is used more in Romans to Revelation, almost three times as much as the word "kingdom." Yet we continue to get a balance of expanding the kingdom while establishing the church. The vision of the Lord's Prayer continues to imbue the New Testament church and the paradigms of church are subjected to the needs

JESUS WAS LAUNCHING A KINGDOM SO RADICAL IN NATURE THAT WE MUST REALIGN OUR WHOLE CONCEPT OF WHAT GOD WANTS TO DO IN AND THROUGH US, ESPECIALLY IN HOW HE WILL DO IT. THIS INCLUDES HOW WE LIVE AS CHURCH.

### **Acts: Establishing the Kingdom Through the Church**

In Acts, the word "church" is used twice as much as the word "kingdom." The next progression in Jesus' strategy to establish His kingdom on earth was taking place—planting multiplying churches as agents of His kingdom coming on earth.

But clear in the thinking of the early disciples was the priority of establishing the kingdom through the church. Their priority was still the King and reaching the lost through expanding His kingdom. For example:

And he [Paul] entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. . . . He withdrew from [the synagogue] and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. (Acts 19:8-10 NASB)

The result was that many churches were established as the kingdom was established. In the one movement above in Acts 19, most likely dozens of churches or more were started in this Roman province called Asia—churches that matured deeply and spread rapidly. Most scholars agree that in this two year span of time the seven churches of Revelation were started by new disciples like Epaphras in Colossae (Col. 1:7).

Even the closing words of Acts are about the kingdom:

And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered. (Acts 28:30-31, NASB)

of the Kingdom. In Revelation one church is praised that its latter works exceeded its first (Rev. 2:19), while others are chastised for losing their vision and love for the King (Rev. 2:4). This latter church was the Ephesian church which saw such explosive growth decades earlier in Acts 19 cited above.

There is a lesson here for us: It is easy for churches to subtly shift their focus from the King and His kingdom, often becoming obsessed with themselves and their own successes, structures or traditions. The church then and today is in danger of repeating the mistakes that Jesus chastised the Jewish leaders for:

And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! (Mark 7:9 ESV)

How easy it is for us to elevate the church along with our structures, programs and traditions above the vision of knowing the King and establishing His kingdom. We easily lose sight of the end-vision. When we focus on church first, we get kingdom wrong.

### **Why Church?**

Yet make no mistake: Church is at the heart of God's kingdom plan! It is not either church or kingdom. It is both. When the church submits herself to the King and His kingdom ways, then the church emerges in all her intended glory!

God's plan from the beginning was to sum up everything in heaven under His Son Jesus:

God has now revealed to us his mysterious plan regarding Christ, a plan to fulfill his own good pleasure. And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth. (Eph. 1:9-10 NLT)

Yet God's plan has always been to fill the universe with his glory through the church, the Bride of Christ and Body of Christ:

And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (Eph 1:22-23 ESV)

The church was meant to be the agent of filling the whole earth with the glory of God—His King-reign—as the Body. The church was meant to be the eternal companion of the Son as the Bride. Ephesians 5 and Revelation 19-21 present a glorious picture of the church being presented to the Son spotless and radiant. All of history is moving toward the preparation and presentation of this Bride to the Son.

This is why we focus unquestionably on *Church-Planting Movements*, not simply people movements. We don't start churches because this is the most pragmatic way to reach people. We start churches because this is God's plan in His eternal kingdom.

In fact starting churches is intensely pragmatic, but that is the beauty of God's design in establishing the church as a visible expression and means of His kingdom. It is easy for new believers to lose headway in their spiritual growth if they are not incorporated as a part of the precious body of Christ locally.

### **What Will it Take to Reach All of the Lost? Church-Planting Movements**

The history of the church from Acts to the present is replete with new movements of multiplying disciples and churches. Throughout history, men and women, burdened with the question "What will it take to reach all of the lost?", have subjected their preferences, traditions and paradigms to the vision of Kingdom expansion.

In an age in which the evangelism of most established churches and denominations lags far behind population growth, fresh examination is required to answer that simple question: "*What will it take to reach all of the lost in our generation?*" Believers from all traditions must cry out to the Heavenly Father with the same humble desperation of that first prayer: "Father, cause your kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven!"

There are places in the world in which the numbers of new disciples and churches are growing faster than the pace of local population, or showing signs of moving in that direction. These Church-Planting Movements in their varicolored hues recall to us the vision of kingdom come and the spirit of Acts. They hearken back to historical movements such as the Wesleyan movement or early Baptist church planting. Only through movements in which, through the priesthood of the believer, each disciple carries the DNA and authority to pass on what he or she has learned

and can train others to do the same, will we see the lost reached in our generation.

### **Sacrificing Paradigms of Church for the Kingdom**

Yet in all movements, questions arise about the new forms, the new church paradigms, the new methods, the new ways. Whether the Apostle Paul or John Wesley, these paradigms are initially derided by the established church. But through sheer endurance and lasting fruit, many of these paradigms eventually become the norm. *Too often what is radical today is commonplace tomorrow.*

Historically, the leaders of these movements have sacrificed their expectations, paradigms and structures for the good of the Kingdom. Their desire to see the Kingdom come and the Word obeyed has challenged them to surrender their ways of doing things to the Spirit's leadership. They have been more preoccupied with building the Kingdom than on perpetuating a particular model of doing church. Their goal has not been a perfect model of church but a perfect spread of the Kingdom.

There is no uniform biblical model of what a church must be. We see numerous examples of culturally adapted models in the Scripture. *There is room for a number of types of churches fulfilling unique roles in each society.*

In pursuing the vision of the Lord's Prayer, however, for the sake of reaching all of the lost, we often advocate reproducible churches that can spread endlessly through a society by the hands of ordinary believers led by the Spirit. In the pages of this issue, you will see how various missionaries, pastors and church planters have wrestled with this age old question of spreading the Kingdom through the sustained planting of reproducing churches.

The Spirit is moving in powerful ways around the world. We are always in the same danger that the religious leaders of Jesus' day faced, of hardening our methods and structures against the Spirit:

Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved. (Matt. 9:17 ESV)

The church is in ferment around the world because the wine of the Spirit is in ferment. Our first desire must be the Spirit of the King and His kingdom come. Let us adjust our structures to what He directs by the Word in each new community. Let us not become hardened, self-focused and brittle. Rather let us be inspired in these pages to sacrifice our paradigms to the spread of His kingdom in every people! f

1. See more about these movements in *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* by Steve Smith with Ying Kai, WIGTake Resources, 2011. Part of this article cites sections of that book. It is available at [www.ChurchPlantingMovements.com](http://www.ChurchPlantingMovements.com) and on Amazon's Kindle.



# FACING THE BRUTAL FACTS OF CHURCH-PLANTING

NEILL MIMS

Many people misunderstand why some missionaries pursue Church-Planting Movements and models such as house churches. If we discuss some issues that are often forgotten, you may understand better why Church-Planting Movements are not just about the movements that God may provide, but are founded upon solid missiological principles when pursued wisely under God's Holy Spirit.

If you have read the books *Good to Great* (Jim Collins, William Collins Publishing, 2001), or *Breakthrough Churches* (Thomas Rainer, Zondervan Publishing, 2005), they propose a similar framework to see progress in the mission of any organization. I find these principles also fit well as we seek to plant churches around the world.

The authors say that before we implement a meaningful plan, we often fail because we do not "Face the Brutal Facts" or the difficult realities about what we are trying to do. Only after considering what may hinder us from our goal are we best prepared to make and pursue the best action plans.

To introduce just a few of the brutal facts of church planting, I often ask the following questions to face the hard realities that are often neglected.

**First, what do you think is the average attendance of churches in America?** I enjoy hearing many Asians respond, "500", "800", "2,000." But actually as we consider "averages" and especially if we take out the largest super churches which make the average higher, that number is closer to about 75 persons. The Southern Baptist average has been about 80 for years. Are these numbers surprising? Why? If you consider the average attendance in a

number of "mission" countries, the averages are much smaller. For example, in Cambodia, after about 22 years of active church planting, church and mission leaders acknowledge most churches in the country (the vast majority use a *traditional* model) have average attendance somewhere between 15-20. Only a handful of churches have grown larger than 50 in attendance.

**A second question: What size do most pastors want their church to be?** Usually of course we hear numbers of at least 150—200. Many dream of being a "Willow Creek" or "Saddleback" with thousands of members. But do the numbers above mean most pastors are "failures?" Most of us will quickly shake our head or say "NO!"

**Third: How many people in a church does it take to support one full-time pastor/minister?** The first answer I almost always get for this question is, "Ten"! Of course they are thinking about ten tithing members. But they forget that not all members of a church have incomes or choose to tithe. In most countries/cultures the average it takes is about 70-80. Is this surprising? Why?

**A final question for this exercise:** Based on average church size being about 75 in the USA, but the number of members needed to support a full-time pastor being about 70-80, how many American pastors do you think are "bi-vocational" or "lay-leaders?" Though it is difficult to get this data for many denominations, Southern Baptists have about 50% lay leaders. That doesn't mean that the church does not help those pastors with some expenses or salary, but that these pastors have another full-time or significant part-time job to meet most of their expenses. And remember that the Southern Baptist average church size is about 80, not the usual 75. This brutal fact really amazes most Asian Christian leaders because they just assume that all American churches are "big" and that all have full-time, well-supported pastors, and they wonder why they struggle so much to make a living.

So... if we take just a few of the above brutal facts into consideration we might draw quite a few working conclusions about our model and methods for church planting. Here are some that come to mind as we train in several countries:



Since 2009 Neill guides the Missions Strategy Training for the IMB in Southeast Asia Peoples Affinity Group. If you would like to find out more about attending Church Planting Strategy Training offered by the International Mission Board in Southeast Asia or other opportunities, you may contact Neill Mims at: MrNeillM@gmail.com

- The church at large will always need to have a large number of bi-vocational leaders leading local churches.
- If you pursue traditional models of church planting it will be very expensive and very difficult to grow even a few churches larger than 50-80 persons.
- Many difficulties and cultural issues prevent most churches from growing larger than “average” size. Among those are a leader’s spiritual gifts, personality, work ethic and interpersonal skills.
- Average people do seem to be able to start and lead churches that average 10-40 people. This seems to be the average size God grows most churches to.
- Let’s face it—the brutal facts of God’s kingdom are that the gifting of many church leaders and the situations they face make it difficult to grow a church beyond 70 people.

If we face the “brutal fact” that most churches in the world are small, and that this is how God usually works in His churches, then we know that the normal pattern is to have small churches—thousands and thousands of them!

So... why pursue Church-Planting Movements? We are starting normal-sized churches, with God’s normal people. Almost every church starts small... so why should leadership or missionaries bear the burden to raise large amounts of money for each church plant to try to become large or support a full-time pastor when many will not? If the church is to grow large and have a facility with full-time staff, that should largely be a factor of whether the church members can do that from within in a self-supporting and self-sustaining manner.

Which will bring God more glory: To work to start many small churches, or to start and grow only one or two large churches? It is churches planting churches by average believers that seems truly amazing! When that happens rapidly in a number of venues, we call that a Church-Planting Movement.

What would happen if every church started a church or two every year? Pray about this for your church! In many places around the world, this is the norm.

### **Our Strength is Our Weakness**

Church-Planting Movements are invariably lay-led movements. What we see in the West is the predominance of professional-led churches. While there’s nothing wrong with wanting leaders to be as well-equipped and competent as possible, the brutal fact is that in the West there is a growing chasm between the leadership and the laity. In many respects, our strength has become our weakness.

A new church start on the booming west-end of a city in America offers a case in point. The association of Baptists located a strategic property in the midst of an

under-churched yet bustling suburb filled with newly-arrived, unchurched prospective church members. To get the new church up and going, the association invited staff members from a local Christian mission organization to voluntarily participate in the new church. Almost immediately the church was up and running with seminary trained, highly competent musicians, Bible teachers, worship leaders, outreach coordinators, and children’s workers.

Two years later, the church closed its doors. What happened? Visitors to the church found it easy to sit and enjoy the many services this church offered, but found little need for their own services. Prospective new members felt welcomed, but not needed. There was no position in the church that they could fill better than one of the mission agency staff members who typically had seminary training, overseas ministry experience and a high motivation to minister.

In a similar way, the professionalization of the ministry has produced high quality teaching, worship and ministry, but has often left the laity behind as passive listeners. In Church-Planting Movements, the laity is mobilized and unleashed to be the *avant garde*, the cutting edge, of kingdom advance.

The same was true of our own evangelical heritage in America. Reading Rodney Stark and Roger Finke’s *The Churching of America*, it is clear that the more educated and professional denominations at the time of America’s early decades ridiculed the fervor and folly of those populist denominations with their brush arbor revivals and circuit-riding preachers. While the professionals at Harvard, Yale and Princeton complained, the lay-led populists won the West.

The same is true today. The future will be won, not by the most educated and erudite, but by the masses of believers who are summoned and equipped to take up the mantle of kingdom advance. This is the key to world evangelization. If we are to see Church-Planting Movements again in America, it will only happen when we learn how to equip the masses of believers, who make up the body of Christ, to be disciple-makers and church planters. Most of this untapped group are currently at rest, watching the paid professionals carry out the work of ministry.

### **Centrifugal vs Centripetal**

You know how centrifugal force works, right? The very term has its origins in two Latin words meaning “center” and “flee.” Centrifugal forces push objects outward away from the center. Centrifugal forces are at work in Church-Planting Movements (CPMs). Rather than joining a central, mother church, CPM churches spin out to form new bodies of believers within the communities of lost persons that they eventually reach for Christ.

Contrast this with centripetal forces, which characterize our Western church model. In the West, there is little incentive for a pastor to spin off his church members into multiplying new (yet small) congregations of believers. The very life and health of the Western church model depends upon attracting and keeping as many new, or old, believers as possible. The salaries of the pastoral staff and the financing of programs and buildings depend upon it. This centripetal or attractional model is not without merit and has a definite role, but it is usually antithetical to the CPM paradigm.

### **Ecclesionomics or Follow the Money**

A colleague who had spent many years successfully launching Church-Planting Movements in South Asia recently found himself back for an extended stay in America. He immediately began doing what he knew best: he used the *Training for Trainers* (T4T) model to launch multiplying churches. Very quickly, though, he ran into the kind of obstacles that abort many CPM efforts in the West:

**1) We have enough churches already.** Living in the Bible belt, my friend found churches everywhere. They were two-thirds empty, but they were there. Each one had a pastor who was struggling to keep his flock in the fold and his head above water. When my friend cast a vision for multiplying new churches, their response was unanimous: We have enough churches already.

*Lesson one: Many people believe we just need to grow existing churches and that new churches may be in competition with existing ones. To suggest new church plants in America, you're swimming against a powerful current of those who want to keep growing their existing churches.*

Undaunted, my friend vowed to the pastors not to plant new churches, but rather to start new discipleship groups. Within a couple of years, he had more than 70 discipleship groups meeting throughout his area.

### **2) How do I feed my family?**

About a year later, my friend telephoned me:

"How's the work going?" I asked.

"Great!" he said, "but there's just one problem."

"What's that?" I asked.

"I've got to figure out how to feed my family."

Though the movement was doing well, it offered no funding option for a full-time professional CPM catalyst (i.e. missionary). It also explained why there are so few CPM catalysts at work in America.

Church-Planting Movements are a noble ideal, but there's no money in them. Don't misunderstand what I'm saying here. Pastors don't become pastors to become

wealthy. But neither do they become pastors with expectations that their family will starve. The traditional Western church paradigm has many strengths and weaknesses, but as an economic model, it generally works. The more parishioners one attracts, the more fiscally viable the institution becomes.

*Lesson two: Pursuing a model that needs money to exist often leaves out potential members who have little or no money.*

Such possible members could include immigrants, inner city unemployed or underemployed, college students and youth. If our church model depends upon funding from our members then it will always be at a loss in reaching the poor, the student, and the disenfranchised.

The Church-Planting Movement model has flourished among the poor and disenfranchised because it has overcome the money obstacle. For this to happen, though, three things had to occur:

*1) Removal of overhead.* CPMs become affordable when removing the funding demands of full-time professional church leadership and buildings. While all of these things are good, they create a centripetal force within a church that invariably works against multiplying new communities of faith.

*2) Parsing the task.* Just as you would parse a sentence to find its nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, so too you can parse the task of being a church to find its underlying responsibilities of worship, fellowship, ministry, discipleship and mission. Roughly these tasks can all be rolled up into the job description of a full-time pastor (as in the traditional church model) or they can be rolled out into the hands of the laity (as in the CPM model). As the work of the church gets disseminated throughout the church, so too does the sense of ownership of the church's life and mission become widely held throughout the church body.

*3) Providing for a few full-time catalysts.* There is a need for full-time workers, but in the CPM paradigm, these full-timers are not the house church or small church pastors and ministry-staff members. Rather, they are the overseers and catalysts, those who oversee multiple house churches—teaching, training, and developing leaders while catalyzing new streams of house church multiplication.

What will it take to see CPMs in America? It will take a return to the pioneering spirit of our predecessors who saw an entire continent in need of Christ rather than a single church or denomination in need of expansion. Several denominations in the USA grew because "circuit riders" (sometimes lay leaders themselves), would plant several churches at a time, raise up young men to be their pastors, and continue to plant. A current change begins with a recognition of the brutal facts of our current condition that impedes our progress forward.<sup>f</sup>



# WHAT'S MISSING IN OUR GREAT "COME-MISSION?"

THE ROLE OF REPRODUCING EVANGELISM, DISCIPLE-MAKING AND CHURCH PLANTING FOR ORDINARY BELIEVERS

MIKE SHIPMAN

In May 2007 my national partner baptized Joe, a Muslim-background believer. Instead of taking Joe to church, we taught him how to make disciples and start multiplying churches. Less than three years later, Joe handed me a chart showing 175 churches that had been planted, one-third of which were fourth generation and beyond.

Hundreds of new Christ-followers are becoming outstanding disciples, while discipling the next spiritual generation. More than 450 house churches have been planted in this new Church-Planting Movement (CPM). Perhaps even more rewarding is the fact that others who are emulating this first-century approach are also experiencing astounding breakthroughs. Beyond evangelistic results, Christ is showing his approval through numerous answered prayers and miracles, much as he did in Acts.

Practitioners of CPM strategies link church planting and church growth under the umbrella of disciple-making. By returning to the Acts pattern of kingdom growth, rather than church growth principles, the established church grows and simultaneously plants the church in unreached areas.

Viewing the Great Commission through the lens of Acts, rather than our traditional lens is the key to discipling both the established church and the newly planted ones. Christ's world-wide discipleship plan effectively disciplined the first-century world and can disciple the

twenty-first century world as well. Understanding what the commission says, and how it works, helps us visualize how the Holy Spirit empowered the disciples to implement it in Acts. The simplest way for understanding Jesus' world-wide discipleship plan is, "1, 2, 3 Do the Great Commission."

## One Core Command

Jesus gave one core command in the Great Commission, "Disciple all of the ethnic groups." This command was given to the twelve apostles, but applies to all believers.

## Two Assurances

The preface and conclusion to the Great Commission guarantee its success. Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore..." First of all, every believer has the authority to do the entire Great Commission. Second, Jesus promised his accompaniment to those who obeyed it—"I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Mt. 28:18b, 20c)

## Three Tasks

Going, baptizing, and teaching them to obey, form three parallel tasks to be completed in fulfillment of the command, "Disciple all of the ethnic groups." These three tasks both initiate the new church and guide it to maturity.

*Going* implies sharing the gospel with everyone (e.g. Mark 16:15) as the first step toward discipleship. *Baptizing* is immersing new believers in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to picture their profession of faith in Christ. Baptism also initiates them into the body of Christ. *Teaching* them to obey all of Christ's commands reveals the task of training each new believer to

*Mike Shipman is a CPM trainer who serves with the Southern Baptist International Mission Board in Southeast Asia.*



participate in the core command, “Make disciples of all the nations” while obeying all of the other commands of Christ as well. How the three parallel tasks of the Great Commission are applied often differentiates the Acts church (which is similar to modern CPMs), from the modern established church.

### **Task One: Sharing the Gospel with Everyone.**

#### **What’s missing in Task One?**

Established churches often rely on professional staff to share the gospel. Lay persons are passive in evangelism, even though they are naturally better equipped than many clergy because it is they who have relationships with lost people. Nonetheless, lack of expectation, training and accountability robs the church of its most dynamic evangelistic potential.

Beyond witnessing, each believer should lead people to faith and initiate the discipleship process. Calling the pastor to lead people to faith or simply inviting them to evangelistic events not only stunts the growth of the witness, it insures that all new believers will “call the pastor” instead of becoming fully functioning spiritual adults. In other words, it sets the stage for the “Come-mission.”

#### **Changing from “Come-mission” to “Go-mission” for Task One**

CPMs maximize the evangelistic potential of each new convert. It is natural for new believers to share the gospel if they are trained to do so. After baptism, whether or not new believers share their faith is the earliest sign of their sincerity when we equip them properly. By sharing the gospel with others, they make themselves accountable to live out the Christ-life in holiness. Therefore, witnessing facilitates the believer’s spiritual growth.

To accomplish the task of each new believer sharing the gospel, it is best to have one simple, reproducible default evangelism method. Even though a person is capable of sharing the gospel in varied and perhaps multi-faceted ways, it is better even for the church leaders and clergy to model a simple way of doing evangelism. The main reason for this is because a single, simple method is more easily replicated by lay persons. Similarly, this kind of method can be immediately applied by new converts. Every CPM employs one simple, culturally appropriate way to witness that can be emulated by every new believer.

LAY PERSONS ARE PASSIVE IN EVANGELISM, EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE NATURALLY BETTER EQUIPPED THAN MANY CLERGY BECAUSE IT IS THEY WHO HAVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOST PEOPLE.

### **Task Two: Baptizing New Believers into Christ and His Body.**

#### **What’s missing in Task Two?**

In Acts, baptism illustrated the believer’s new faith in Christ and introduced them into the body of Christ. Each new believer was baptized by immersion, immediately after profession of faith in Christ. Normally either the person who reached the new believer or someone else who attended at the time performed the baptism.

Striking differences appear when comparing baptism in Acts with that of most established churches. Practices such as infant baptism, withholding baptism, baptizing by modes other than immersion, limiting baptizing to the clergy and post-conversion delayed baptism are examples of diversions from the baptismal pattern of the early disciples. These diversions were perhaps well intended to resolve practical issues, but have hindered Jesus’ discipleship plan.

#### **Changing from “Come-mission” to “Go-mission” for Task Two**

Churches should reconsider their current baptism patterns in light of the Acts pattern. For instance, does delayed baptism diminish the evangelistic zeal and effectiveness of new converts? Profession of faith and baptism are inseparable in the New Testament, because baptism represented the new convert’s profession of faith.

When delayed, baptism comes to signify spiritual maturity, rather than profession of faith. The result is that growth in maturity ironically progresses slower because the new convert has actually failed to obey in one of the first steps of obedience—baptism. To the contrary, when genuine believers are immediately baptized, they immediately practice their new lifestyle of obedience by professing their faith publicly. The wonderful result is that they remain perfectly on the path towards spiritual maturity.

Many churches are already implementing patterns of baptism in which the person who leads another to faith actually baptizes the new convert. Handing a new convert off to the pastor for baptism interrupts the natural discipleship process which should occur between new converts and the persons who led them to Christ.

Further, the Acts baptism pattern can be fully implemented when planting churches in Samaria and beyond. Samaria represents people beyond our local area or those near us who aren’t being reached because of ethnicity, class differences, or other heterogeneity issues. There the goal is not to take new converts to the sending church, but to make them a church. Therefore, they are baptized by the person who reached them, into the new church they are forming rather than into the established church.

### **Task Three: Training New Believers to Fulfill All of Christ's Commands, Beginning with the Great Commission.**

#### **What's Missing in Task Three?**

Traditional churches often teach believers to grow in knowledge. However, Jesus' challenge is "teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you." Instructing people to learn is indeed teaching. But teaching with the goal of obedience is training. We are usually strong in teaching, but weak in training believers to do, not just know about, evangelism, discipling new believers and church planting.

The goal of genuine training is that Christ's followers will obey all of his commands. In reality most new believers are only expected to attend worship, give, read their Bibles and pray. Few believers even aspire to become full-fledged disciples of Christ. Only the cream of the crop even consider being involved in evangelism, much less church planting.

Most protestant denominations believe in the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer, but we don't practice much of its true meaning. Even when lay persons do priestly functions, they are usually limited to evangelism, teaching, and praying. How would the world be different if all new believers were trained priests who have the authority and expectations to do all priestly functions? That is what Christ envisioned—a kingdom of priests who would disciple all ethnic groups beginning in Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

#### **Changing from "Come-mission" to "Go-mission" for Task Three**

The revolutionary concept of the Great Commission is that each new believer was entrusted with the command of discipling all of the ethnic groups and was trained with a reproducing manner to become a partner in the plan. Each believer was expected to pass on the gospel to the next new believer. The plan was a great "Go-mission" rather than a "Come-mission." The "Go-mission" continues to push outward until it is either neglected by new converts to whom it is entrusted, or not shared by those who bring the gospel.

Sharing the task of evangelism, discipleship and church planting with each generation of new believers requires effective training with accountability. The goal is not for new converts to become our disciples, but rather our partners in world evangelization. In addition to recognizing the new believers' authority to fully carry out the Great Commission, they must be trained to do it. The commission was powerful, yet simple, making it readily transferrable. The goal of the practitioner should be to hear the new convert say, "I can do this too," rather

than, "You can do that because of your advanced training. Maybe someday I can too."

With this in mind, CPMs have discovered that immediate transfer of authority, coupled with ongoing training, is the key to making new converts into partners. Modeling tasks too long for new disciples creates unhealthy dependence and usually guarantees that they will not grow to full spiritual maturity. Training new believers to implement the Great Commission is foundational to their personal spiritual development. Discipleship becomes active, instead of passive. In the process of reaching their own oikos and training those they reach to do the same thing, new believers often grow in dramatic advances as they abide in Christ and do his works.

Active discipleship in obeying this command of Christ equips them to obey Christ's commands and teach them to others as well. On-going, step-by-step discipleship provides the incremental training with accountability which is ideal for making disciples. In this way a disciple becomes a student, practitioner and teacher simultaneously.

Training new believers to obey all of Christ's commands includes both outward and inward commands. As new believers focus outward, they must also be trained in a transferrable way of studying and teaching the Bible. This ensures that new believers can pass on these skills to others, even without the church planter present.

#### **1, 2, 3 Go Mission!**

Following the pattern of the Great "Go-mission" instead of our usual "Come-mission" challenges us to consider the benefit of making new believers into churches, instead of taking them to established churches. It also challenges us to make disciples and disciple-makers simultaneously.

The advantages of the "Go-mission" are numerous, as are its challenges. Radical execution of Jesus' commission prepares the established church to serve on the front-line of spiritual battle, where true spiritual life is most often experienced. Miracles most often occur in the field, rather than in church buildings. This is especially true when the gospel enters new areas.

Doing the "Go-mission" instead of the "Come-mission" maximizes every believer's ministry potential. Among the greatest joys of participating in Acts-type CPMs is observing as normal people become outstanding evangelists, trainers and church planters. Equipping them and sending them out to do the Great Commission dramatically increases their competence and confidence. Moreover, by recruiting priests instead of spectators, the kingdom of Christ rapidly multiplies toward fulfillment of his commission. As CPM practitioners and established church ministers, we share one focus, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." (Mt. 6:10, NASB)<sup>f</sup>

# CHURCH MODELS

## AND HOW THEY MIX (OR NOT) WITH CHURCH-PLANTING MOVEMENTS

NEILL MIMS

*While no one structure is prescribed for Church-Planting Movements (CPMs) or rapid multiplication, adaptation and change is often required to allow CPM-type groups to exist within these structures.*

“... and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” (Matthew 16:18, NIV).

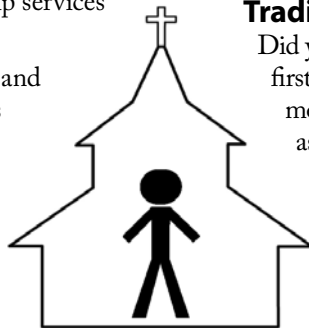
When you hear the word “church” and think of how a church should be organized, what comes to mind? Is it a certain building you pass as you travel? Do you picture people gathered and worshiping inside the church you attend now? Do images of deacons, pastors, Sunday school classes, and worship services fill your thinking?

When you think of starting a new church and what that would eventually look like, does your current church come to mind? Most people tend to think church should be organized like the church in which they grew up or attend now. But actually, there are hundreds of ways to organize and lead church life and structure in this changing world.

In Church-Planting Movements, many people think we advocate only starting house churches.



Since 2009 Neill guides the Missions Strategy Training for the IMB in Southeast Asia Peoples Affinity Group. If you would like to find out more about attending Church Planting Strategy Training offered by the International Mission Board in Southeast Asia or other opportunities, you may contact Neill Mims at: [MrNeillM@gmail.com](mailto:MrNeillM@gmail.com)



While the house church model is the most common model around the world, a number of models can be adapted to work along similar CPM principles.

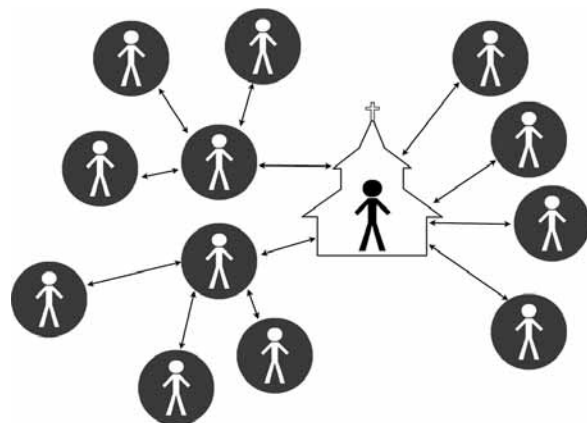
Let's look at a few current models of church, all the while acknowledging that each model will have strengths and weaknesses. Which models will best accommodate exciting and multiplying kingdom growth, while also being more affordable and possible for average believers to pursue?

Look at this picture (a big building with steeple on top) and ask, “If we give a name to this model, what would it be?”

### Traditional or Attractional Church

Did you think, “Traditional Church?” That's usually the first answer I get from groups I train. This church is most often a traditional or attractional church. I then ask, “If we could summarize the goal of growth for traditional churches, what would it be?” Someone will usually answer: “bring people in” and/or “build bigger buildings.” With attractional churches, I draw arrows pointing into the building to draw people in. I then draw bigger buildings (and more rooms/expansions) on top of the existing picture. Churches like this may have small group meetings, but often they meet onsite. This is a legitimate model of church with specific strengths. An inherent weakness is that it is usually expensive, and most traditional churches do not grow much or build bigger buildings. Many pastors of these churches feel like failures when it comes to growth because they see much larger traditional churches held up as the example. Quite a few churches in the traditional model are actually shrinking.

What would you call this model?



### Cell Church

This kind of church has groups that generally meet outside the main church building during the week. The arrows signify (by pointing both ways) that the model is built around encouraging people to attend BOTH celebration/worship at the main church each week and a cell or small group. These smaller gatherings (which have many other names), usually meet weekly at various times in homes or even businesses. Is a cell church a little better in some ways than a traditional church with activities that typically meet only on the church campus at fixed times on Sunday and Wednesday? Quite a few people have thought this is better in allowing for more growth and more participative leadership by members. Thousands of churches have been started this way, and thousands of other existing churches have tried to transition their churches to the cell model over the past forty years. (Sadly, some have almost killed their church trying to transition.) Now, there are only a few mega-churches around the world that do not at least have some of their people meeting in cells or small groups off site.

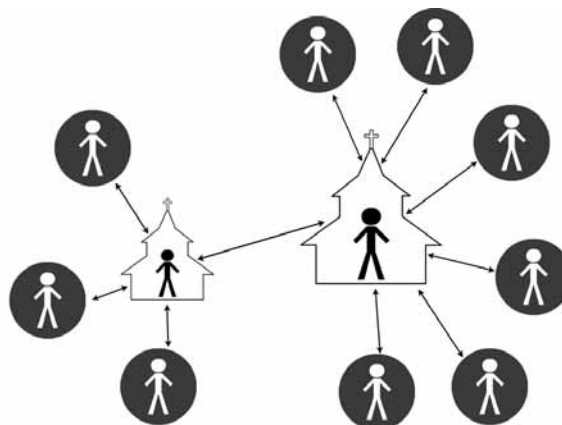
The cell church normally says that the life of the church is in the small groups. If attendees must make a choice between small group or celebration worship, some cell churches would encourage the small group attendance first. In essence, however, many cell churches retain a strong attractional model—"Come to our small group" or "Come to our worship service or outreach event." And an inherent weakness of cell churches is that they can only grow as large as the administrative capabilities of their staff and senior leadership.

Another inherent weakness in the cell church model is that the leadership of the cell is centered around one strong leader. As the months progress, an apprentice is

raised up to lead the next group that will start when the cell grows large enough to "multiply." However, growth is limited to the time it takes to develop competent new cell group leaders.

### Mixed Model

The third model is the Mixed Model.

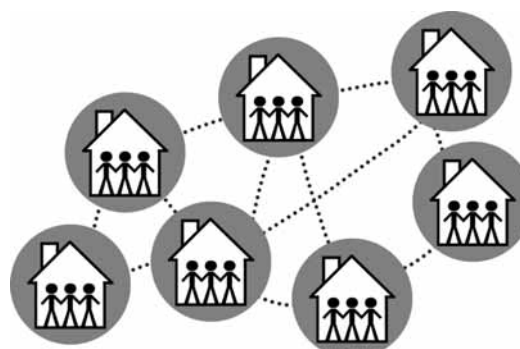


In this model some of the cells become house churches or new traditional or cell churches. This model is seen in several places in Asia where we work, where some of the small groups are too far away for them to come to the main church. In those cases, these new cells or clusters of cells start a new celebration point and start a new church, often connected to the mother church.

An interesting new phenomenon we face in Asia is that many churches using a more CPM approach such as *Training for Trainers (T4T)*, are using the blended approach in empowering new believers to start new groups (or even house churches), but encouraging them to attend new larger celebration points that can multiply around their city. While this model does have growth limitations (e.g. needing to rent new celebration points), it allows these churches to include many CPM elements that allow for more explosive growth.

### House Church Network

The next model is a House Church Network.





In a network, house churches or Bible study groups that appear to be on the way to becoming churches meet at least weekly in homes or other convenient locations. The house churches themselves may be their only expression of church meeting. But sometimes these groups or their leaders get together once a month or once a quarter in a joint meeting for celebration or fellowship. Because of their own choice and vision, or because of distance, or because of political or religious restrictions, they cannot all gather weekly in a large celebration worship. When they do meet together in worship times, fellowships or retreats, very small house churches are often encouraged by seeing that they are part of a larger movement. Often the pastors and leaders within these networks have on-going relationships with the individuals who mentored them, so there can be fellowship, training and membership within a larger network of churches.

For each of the previous models, we put one stick figure person in the middle of the main church building, house church or cell group. This symbolizes that the church, house church or cell group is centered around a pastoral leader of some sort. In illustrations of latter church models, the number of figures may be multiple, implying more shared leadership.

Cell leaders are often an extension of the central pastoral staff. In this case they follow instructions as dictated by senior church leadership. There is sometimes a “leadership lid” in cell churches, and cell leaders will sometimes leave the church after a few years because they aren’t allowed to take on more leadership or give more input on how the cells are organized, worship, study or act.

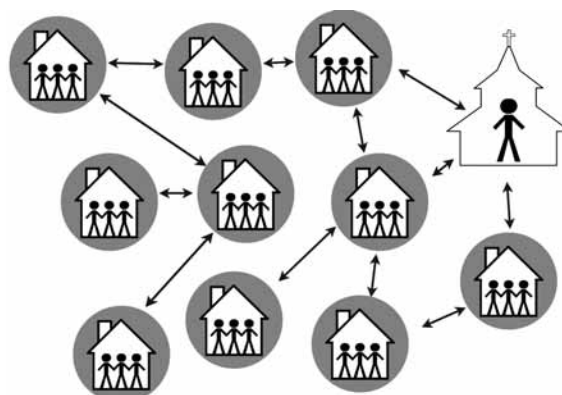
In the diagrams, it looks like the cell leaders and house church leaders are similar in size and function. However, there are key differences between a cell leader and a pastor of a house church. A house church leader will need more preparation in order to be empowered to organize how and what the church studies, and he must provide more shepherding than would a typical cell church leader. House church leaders are normally empowered to administer the ordinances of Lord’s Supper and baptism and collect offerings, whereas cell leaders may not. While house church leaders operate more autonomously, it is great to encourage these leaders to receive continual training and mentoring by others following a similar model, or by a traditional pastor who believes in their ministry.

This leads us to a weakness inherent in the pure house church model: Most house churches are still centered around one strong leader. When these churches start new churches, often the same church leader leads those new churches. Some house church leaders may lead 5-8

church meetings in a week. The resulting leadership overload is inevitable. We coach these leaders to raise up more leaders, but they often enjoy the leadership role too much to hand it off to others, or they are not good at helping build leadership in others.

### Church-Planting Movement Model

The fifth model is the most common CPM model, and is typified by the *Training for Trainers (T4T)* movement. This primarily allows for churches to be built around *oikos* lines as average believers reach other people for Christ and group them into small groups and sometimes house churches. It is also a typical model pursued in the *Discovery Bible Study* CPM approach.



The arrows in this picture signify that key leaders in this model are part of two groups... one they are attending where they are fed and mentored, and another group which they are leading. This mentoring can go on for quite some time (hopefully at least 9-18 months but the relationships will continue longer). The several stick figures in each group signify that each group can sometimes raise up several lay people who may start other new Bible study groups that may become churches.

This model is built around individuals being formed into Bible studies or training groups and then each one being challenged to go out and start their own Bible study or training group with people they reach with the gospel. Every person in subsequent groups is encouraged to go start their own groups. Each Bible study/worship group can be organized into a church as they study together and are guided by leadership to become covenanted together and have all the characteristics of a healthy church. Several trainers are using Acts 2:36-47 as a model Scripture to show most of what a church will practice. (For more information, see the book *T4T: a Discipleship Re-Revolution*, by Steve Smith with Ying Kai, WIGTake Publishing, 2011).

*\*Continued on page 29*

# I t's HUGE

## FIVE LESSONS THE AMERICAN CHURCH IS LEARNING FROM CHURCH-PLANTING MOVEMENTS

CAROL DAVIS

**N**ews of Church-Planting Movements (CPMs) happening around the world has been a wake up call for many American church leaders to *reexamine, reframe and retool*. Others have simply dismissed rapid multiplication of churches as impossible to happen in the U.S.

Tim Martin, Mission Pastor at WoodsEdge Community Church in Houston expresses what many church leaders describe when they hear of and are amazed by all that God is doing through these movements around the world. "I think it's starting to bounce back to America, causing us to radically rethink our whole paradigm of church and mission. I now believe there can be much more, and there must be more."

The speed of movements, the depth of discipleship and commitments of the emerging leaders, frequently cause pastors in the West to pause. This is because CPMs tend to create

a different future. Five lessons were most often mentioned as the important shifts taking place for them.

### **1. COME & GO: The shift from inviting unbelievers to come to our programs and building to sending believers into their world.**

Jesus said that the fields are ready for harvest. To live in this reality, the way of thinking has to intentionally change from "Come" to "Go." God always asks Christians to go to those without him; never the lost to come to church or into Christian space. When this shift in thinking happens, church members start to identify and pray specifically for those in their world who don't yet know Him. This is because the idea of "going" becomes embedded into church life. Similarly, church leaders are much more intentional about training believers to tell their own story and God's story in simple, short and compelling

ways. Frequently, they will use the *Creation to Christ* story, a 10-15 minute overview of the Bible starting in creation and culminating

GOD ALWAYS ASKS CHRISTIANS TO GO TO THOSE WITHOUT HIM; NEVER THE LOST TO COME TO CHURCH OR INTO CHRISTIAN SPACE. WHEN THIS SHIFT IN THINKING HAPPENS, CHURCH MEMBERS START TO IDENTIFY AND PRAY SPECIFICALLY FOR THOSE IN THEIR WORLD WHO DON'T YET KNOW HIM.

a questioning dissonance with our contemporary models, experience and traditions about what it means to be "church." "It has forced me back to the Scripture for my understanding of 'church,'" said John Lo, pastor at Epicentre Church in Pasadena, CA. "The re-framed concepts learned from CPMs have been 'huge' for me," he emphasized.

Those who have chosen this journey express that, for the church in America, it has been an explosion of HOPE for

in Christ.<sup>1</sup> In many cases programming schedules have been radically altered to release their people to "go" more often, and with greater intentionality.

John Lo thinks of "Come" structures as the Old Testament temple where people gathered and the professionals served. "But Jesus said, my body is the temple; and then the temple started walking around. Jesus gave his body instructions to 'Go' in Matt. 9. 37-38; Matt. 28.19-20 and Acts 1.8."

Linda Bergquist, church planter catalyst and mentor in the San Francisco area observed, "Jesus did not assign the

*Carol Davis is a mission strategist and mobilizer with many years of experience. You may contact her at [intent@pobox.com](mailto:intent@pobox.com)*

70 as a core group for a new come structure, but instead sent them decentralized by twos.”

## **2. GROUP CONVERSIONS: The shift to multiplying groups of disciples not just individual disciples.**

Kevin Johnson, mission pastor at Antioch Community Church in Waco, Texas says, “We had to get back to *oikos*: households; life on life.” In CPMs around the world, the Kingdom is established in a relationally-connected group and then spreads group to group. The Scripture refers to each of these groups as a household. The Greek word for household is *oikos*, and includes a circle of influence, not just immediate family.

The promise of Acts 11:14 and 16:31 is that networked groups will come to faith. The key is to not extract an individual from his or her *oikos* when there is spiritual hunger, but to disciple the group together into faith. This is in contrast to what has been the general U.S. pattern. Typically, we see individuals come to faith and then we disciple them individually, and sometimes not very well if at all. In many CPMs the early phases of discipleship often happen before faith, as the unbelieving group meets and explores what it actually means to follow Christ. Or, the early discipleship happens post-conversion but as a group of connected individuals walking down the same path together. These individuals do not have to be family. In many CPMs these groups are the relationships that fit the context—workmates, classmates, members of the same extra-curricular avocation.

## **3. COUNTING GENERATIONS: The shift to count and do whatever it takes to regularly and quickly get to the 4<sup>th</sup> generation and beyond of disciples, groups and churches (II Tim. 2.2).**

The process of getting quickly to the next generation of disciples, leaders and groups is well established where Church-Planting Movements are taking place. One helpful tool has been the three-thirds format for group meetings, where caring, infusion of vision, mutual loving accountability, learning the Word, goal setting, practice and prayer are integrated into a seamless and regular process. Each week members of the group live in life-on-life accountability to love the Lord unconditionally and pursue His Commission in reaching and loving others. This process is described in *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution*<sup>2</sup>. A key focus for the group is to win and train the next generation of disciples who will repeat the process.

Amazingly, this process is not just fruitful overseas. Where the principles and process of generational growth are applied in small group meetings and leadership development, it has similar outcomes in the U.S.<sup>3</sup> The

values-imprint on the new believer is another make-or-break element in getting to the next generation. Rather than take a new believer to a “come” meeting where they sit and listen, their new life in Christ must start in a very different way. The individual should be encouraged to start a group in his/her *oikos*. They should be where they are taught to study and obey God’s Word and they



should be equipped to immediately pray for and witness to those they know. When this approach is successful, group members are given the vision, tools and the time to practice, along with loving encouragement, to win the next generation.

This leads to a second critical factor which is the continual vision for reproduction of the next generation. Each member and each group strives to be a parent, grandparent and great grandparent. One effective CPM catalyst in the U.S. describes it this way: “I evaluate my disciple-making not by my disciples, but by my disciples’ disciples.” All along the way the groups celebrate each new generation. *What we envision, measure and celebrate determines the outcome.*

## **4. REPRODUCIBILITY: The shift from lengthy training, policy-driven structures and more academic materials, to simplicity and the reproducibility of means, methods, tools and structures.**

Equipping and training is best accomplished by modeling with simple tools. Easy-to-learn and obey lessons in the hands of new believers, allows them to do what they have just seen done by a mentor. When they are equipped simply, they disciple those they lead to faith in the same manner, often with only a few moments of encouragement and clarification.

Kevin Johnson says, “We’ve had to learn to just keep it simple, simple, simple in the Antioch community. Our

lessons are now simple; our evangelism tools are simple. We've had to create an environment where there can be many different expressions of small group and where people are released quickly to be more evangelistic and apostolic."

Simple does not mean simplistic – reducing truth beyond its core essence. Rather it means taking deep truths and applications and learning and expressing them in a way that an average new believer can obey and pass on to others. A trait of every CPM in the world is the use of one simple method for evangelism, discipleship and church planting. While many methods could suffice, using a multiplicity of methods confuses new believers. Instead, using just one appropriate and reproducible method enables an explosion of growth as new believers, led by the Spirit, are able to serve as ministers to others.



"It (CPMs) has forced me back to the Scripture for my understanding of 'church.'" — John Lo, pastor at Epicentre Church in Pasadena, CA.

CPMs are teaching us that discipleship can and should result in a rapid maturing process, but this can only come through keeping discipleship obedience-based. Believers must be mutually expected to obey, encouraged to obey and held accountable to obey in the spirit of Hebrews 10:24-25.

As the shifts in understanding and values take place, changes have begun. Christians are now getting out of the building as well as out of their comfort zones. There is deep rejoicing that we are seeing more and speedier conversions, new groups and intentional church planting than previously experienced.

As church leaders embrace these ideas, they tend to start conversations about how to

learn from one another and work out the cultural nuances involved. Several common themes tend to consistently emerge in such discussion. The first is that even when new groups begin with positive momentum, they

often find that cultural gravity pulls them back into the old way of thinking. People revert to inviting the lost or new believers to "come" to existing Christian meetings. Jeff Sundell, a CPM catalyst in North

Carolina says, "This is a killer for generational growth."<sup>4</sup> In our U.S. culture, it takes a while to re-condition even new believers to move away from the "come" mentality to the "go" mentality.

Another issue is that sometimes we don't stay with the emerging leadership long enough to regularly see them through to the point of generational multiplication. In our U.S. mentality to finish the next program, we "finish" our set of discipleship lessons with this first generation group but then abandon them once it is over. We must learn from CPMs overseas to stay with groups for a year or two to help them birth new groups that birth new groups. We must keep our eyes on the end-vision not simply the short-term discipleship.

The lessons from CPMs for the U.S. church are huge. The *reexamination* has taken us back to the Scripture for both principles and practice. However, the *reframing* and *retooling* continues to be a little bit messy. Let us persist with the reframing and the retooling until this way of life becomes the new normal.<sup>f</sup>

1. See <http://t4tonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/2-Creation-to-Christ-Story.pdf> for an example. An animated C2C story will soon be available in short video-segmented downloads for multiple platforms in multiple languages.
2. *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* by Steve Smith with Ying Kai, WIGTake Resources, 2011. Available from [www.ChurchPlantingMovements.com](http://www.ChurchPlantingMovements.com) or on Kindle download from Amazon.
3. For example, see the article in this issue on three examples from North Carolina, p. 21.
4. For more, see Jeff's article in this issue of *Mission Frontiers*.

GEORGE PATTERSON REMINDS US THAT WHEN WE KEEP TEACHING AFTER BELIEVERS QUIT OBEYING, WE ARE ACTUALLY TEACHING THEM THAT IT'S OKAY TO STUDY AND NOT OBEY; OR TO PICK AND CHOOSE WHAT WE WANT TO OBEY.

A simple method enables a shorter on-ramp to enable new believers to mature and disciple others. This is a lesson these U.S. churches are applying to their context.

## 5. OBEDIENCE-BASED LEARNING: The shift from teaching for knowledge of what the Word says- to teaching and accountability for obedience to what the Word says.

This has been one of the lessons learned from CPMs that states the obvious. "Of course we are to teach for obedience," and many wonder how we missed this for so long? It's in the Great Commission: Not "teaching them all that I have commanded," but "teaching them to *obey* all that I have commanded." (Matt. 28:20) It's only in the putting off the old and putting on Christ, as believers apply His Word, that we find quickly transformed and strengthened lives.

George Patterson reminds us that when we keep teaching after believers quit obeying, we are actually teaching them that it's okay to study and **not** obey; or to pick and choose what we want to obey. In this process of discipleship, we are heaping on judgment, as we will all give an account one day for what we know and have not obeyed.

Transformed lives are the fuel to ignite movements. Transformed lives legitimize that Jesus can change things, and nobody needs a God who cannot act in power on their behalf. Transformed lives become change agents themselves.



# HOW TO adapt

## CHURCHES IN CHURCHED CULTURES FOR CHURCH-PLANTING MOVEMENTS:

THREE STORIES FROM NORTH CAROLINA

JEFF SUNDELL AND MIKE WISEMAN FLOYD

The buried treasure of equipping existing churches with evangelism/discipleship tools, like *Training for Trainers* (T4T), is that we may wake the sleeping giant. Every community has an endowment of thousands of believers who, if they have read the New Testament, probably want their church to look more like the book of Acts. People given tools to share the gospel and make disciples for the first time are thrilled to go and do it. The common practice of attracting people to a building for a large meeting, rather than seeking people far from God *where they are*, impedes the Western church (and many others around the world) from becoming a Church-Planting Movement (CPM). But the North American church is a luxury liner making full steam on a course plotted with full financial backing and a wealth of tradition. Notwithstanding an iceberg-type crisis, why worry? Bill Bright said that only about 2% of American evangelicals regularly share their faith, and Alan Hirsch says that 60% of Americans say they would never go to any church, but these facts have not broken the hearts or changed the tactics of enough American Christians. We normally focus on growing the church, not primarily on reaching the lost or transforming communities. Somehow we believe that Sunday church attendance will make disciples and transform lives, and we are half-convinced that true loving community can be rooted in a one-hour meeting of 50 to 10,000 people. It seems that we have confidence in the ministries and gifts of our staff, but not

of those in our congregations. Even small-group discipleship meetings tend to funnel back towards the aims of the mother churches, which generally follow the expectations above.

We need to stop measuring our success by conversions, baptisms, and especially weekly attendance. Instead we should measure success by *tracking multiple generations of believers* whose lives are transformed by the gospel, and who are committed to change their communities in Jesus' name.

Can CPMs change the heading of the North American church? Read these stories of everyday church leaders taking a risk to do so . . .

### Element Church, Alexander Mills, NC: Neal Perry

Element is a progressive, informal church plant where it is common to see a man in a suit next to a guy with tattoos all the way up his arms. But Element has committed to start 100 simple church plants in homes of lost people. Since adopting T4T-based CPM methods, they have begun 17 groups in homes, and at least 5 of them have reproduced other groups. These groups have led 17 new believers to Christ, and baptized 14 of them in homes.

Rickey, whose story is like a highlight film of great plays from CPM discipleship in our area, came to Christ through the simple church ministry of Element. In the summer of 2011, Rickey was hooked on a drug marketed



Mike, his wife Annie and their four kids, one adopted, have been missionary teachers, school founders, and Church-Planting Movement facilitators in the Dominican Republic and Haiti for the last three years. Prior to this, Mike has been a pastor, youth pastor, engineer, contractor and high school teacher. Mike loves to learn and write about the movements that God is using to engage the people of God in the fruition of His Kingdom. You may contact Mike at: [wisemanfloyds@me.com](mailto:wisemanfloyds@me.com)



Jeff is an accomplished businessman with years of church-planting experience. He graduated in 2001 from Southeastern Baptist Seminary with an MDiv in Church Planting and an MA in Intercultural Studies. Most recently, he served with the International Mission Board in South Asia as a Strategy Associate for Northern India, Nepal and Bhutan. His passion is to see people far from God develop into reproducing disciples, one life at a time, who gather into healthy reproducing churches. You may contact Jeff at: [lastfrontiers@pobox.com](mailto:lastfrontiers@pobox.com)

as “bath salts,” but which is actually some form of methamphetamine. One night, Rickey was in a speed-induced rage, throwing furniture and yelling at his wife, when his mother called the county sheriff. After a fist fight with three deputies, during which they attempted to shoot him, Rickey ended up in the county jail. The day he was bailed out, Rickey went to visit the grave side of his friend and mentor, Randy. He found himself crying out to Randy: “Are you in heaven? Is there another life? Answer me if



Shane baptizes Rickey after having led him to Christ as part of a CPM discipleship initiative by Element Church

there is!” As he stayed, tears streaming down his face, he felt himself pushed down to his knees, just asking God to show up. As he drove away from the grave, he saw Shane’s truck pass him, going home. Shane’s and Rickey’s daughters had become best friends, and Rickey wanted what Shane had: stability, happiness at home, faith in God. He followed Shane home and shared his heart. Shane didn’t want to take credit for what he had; he knew he was in a daily battle, and wasn’t fighting alone. What impressed Rickey was that Shane talked about struggles, failures, successes, and being committed to the long haul, with God, his wife, kids, job, and neighbors. Rickey committed himself that day to follow Jesus, repented of the way he had been living, and took a whole new life-course.

Shane did not ask Rickey to recite the sinner’s prayer and then leave him at the altar of the church in the care of others. Shane asked Rickey if he could come to *his home* once a week for the next few months to bring the teachings of Jesus and the community of God’s people to share with his whole family. This was the way of evangelism/discipleship that Shane’s pastor, Neal, had been leading in their church for a couple of years, inspired by *Training for Trainers* and the adaptations of it that Jeff Sundell had brought back from missions in Nepal and shared with Neal and a group of others. It was at least a year-long commitment for both of them and their families. Now Rickey is teaching that group,

along with Shane and some others, and their home group has bounded to over twenty. On the night of the Duke-UNC basketball face-off, Rickey’s and Shane’s daughters were piled together in a bean-bag chair, wearing dueling Duke and Carolina pajamas. They have a lot more to share now that both their dads are leading their families in the way God intended.

### **First Baptist Spindale, Spindale, NC: Andy Evans**

Only a few years ago, First Baptist would run 35-45 on Sundays. Now they regularly have 120 or more. 80% of those people came from home conversions and are still in T4T-based groups. One meeting in a trailer park baptized 26 people in September 2011, and 9 more in October.

First Baptist Spindale had a traditional background. Their strategy for reaching the lost was always attractional: “you need to come here, and we will teach you how to adapt to our culture.” It had been program-driven and maintenance-minded since the beginning. The methods that may have worked in the 1950’s now bear little, if any, fruit. In 2009, this church began to intentionally shift their approach, realizing that Jesus created a multiplicative, mentoring-based ministry. The first step towards change began in a seedy, run-down motel. Someone was willing to allow their room, #114, to be used as a meeting place once a week and thus began Church 114. For approximately 9 months, they saw genuine fruit among what was clearly an unreached crowd. The motel was transient; attendees came and went; but they saw real spiritual hunger expressed and satisfied. There was a real spirit of liberty present in the meetings and there were no traditions to battle.

One of the weaknesses of this method was the lack of continuity inherent in the lifestyles of the crowd. Many disappeared after a few weeks, never to be seen again. Obviously, this made long term discipleship difficult at best, though it still seemed more Jesus-focused than the average Sunday morning church service. Taking what they learned from 114, they began to train leaders in how to press deeper into their community. They taught them how to flexibly structure meetings in homes using the 1/3 – 1/3 – 1/3 concept in T4T (*Training for Trainers*). Now, they have groups meeting in trailer parks, homes, and backyards. One of the biggest challenges is to avoid letting success in drawing people through attractional appeal displace kingdom outreach. We might just be duplicating Sunday morning on Tuesday night in someone’s living room. Instilling accountability to the gospel without using heavy-handed control is crucial. We feel we can walk this out by keeping our eyes on what DNA is transmitted to new believers, but also trusting the work of the Holy Spirit in our leaders. That is a faith risk we continue to take daily.

## Desiring God Community Church (DGCC), Charlotte, NC: Coty Pinckney

Seven churches in the Charlotte area, including DGCC, are engaged in a T4T experiment since late November, 2011. So far, there are 9 training groups among believers, 22 outreach groups (houses of peace) among unbelievers, and 43 people that have come to Christ in homes.

Desiring God Community Church was planted in the University of North Carolina at Charlotte area nine years ago with an emphasis on going to the nations. They also made a concerted effort to reach out to international students. These values and practices paved the way for the introduction of T4T in 2011, paired with a vision for God to bring to salvation 100 people through their witness in 2012 (sermon link).

T4T is stretching DGCC in positive ways, and in particular, the calling for immediate application and obedience has been healthy. They have always emphasized that “walking in the light as He is in the light” requires a change of mind-set and not just a change in activity. However, the emphasis on immediate obedience has helped people to ask more regularly and quickly, “What does this teaching imply for me this week?”

Besides all the positive effects, there have also been some challenges in communicating and implementing T4T principles at DGCC:

- 1) Some hear T4T simply as another evangelism or outreach program. It must be reiterated that T4T is a process of exposing people to the Word in a simple format, encouraging all to commit to immediate obedience, and then holding them accountable for living it. T4T wraps up evangelism, discipleship, leadership development, and church planting in one continuous stream.
- 2) DGCC has to continually reinforce the fact that T4T is a kingdom-building approach, not a church growth strategy. The idea that they could see many people come to Christ who then would not necessarily come Sundays—or not even be involved in DGCC—needs regular repetition.
- 3) A third challenge relates to how the T4T vision meshes with DGCC’s emphasis on the command to “preach the Word . . . with great patience teaching all doctrine.” Under the T4T model, new disciples learn a handful of stories well enough to evangelize and disciple others, thereby living out obedience to the gospel. However, it follows that these new believers should also seek to know the God of the gospel better through a deepening understanding of His character. DGCC knows that this is important and has worked extra hard to confirm that is happening among the new disciples.

DGCC is excited about all these challenges and feels privileged to be part of this process. They don’t know what the gathering of new reproducing disciples into appropriate churches will look like, but they’re praying that God will give them the opportunity to meet those challenges.

Conclusion—So what are we all learning from this?

Good:

- It is effective and biblical to start churches with the lost, not believers. Churches that adopt CPM approaches outstrip conventional churches in conversions, baptisms, and new members.
- Adopting a CPM approach allows many new believers to share their stories and Jesus’ story in a powerful way, gathering more new believers from their social network.
- Some of this sharing results in multiple generations of disciple-making church-planting networks.
- People reaching out using T4T are excited how open unbelievers are to allow evangelistic/discipling meetings in their homes.
- New believers using CPM methods in the States and new believers trained by missionaries overseas are experiencing the same basic training.

Bad:

- Meetings started by traditional churches, even with new believers, tend to revert to the attractional mode, drawing people to one home or meeting rather than sending people out. It is a challenge for existing churches to stay the course towards a true CPM.
- Another challenge is that many existing believers are simply unwilling to commit the time to reach out to their friends and family with the gospel.
- Sometimes in the T4T process, new disciples are impacted negatively by media, friends and even family. Because of this, church planters and trainers must invest at least 1-3 years in discipling, and even more time with emerging leaders. T4T is not 6 lessons and then set people loose, but a mentoring process that requires commitment.

Ugly:

- Winning lost people with all their addictions, social problems, and moral quandaries results in messy situations for discipleship. Some traditional churches might not be accustomed to having to “deal with dirty sheep.” These kinds of churches can take comfort that the very same challenges were faced by the believers as recorded in the Gospels and Epistles.<sup>f</sup>

# A CHURCH-PLANTING MOVEMENT IS A LEADERSHIP Movement

STAN PARKS

As we look around the world today, most dynamic Church-Planting Movements are starting in areas with poverty, crises, turmoil, persecution and few Christians. In contrast, in areas with peace, wealth, protection and many Christians, our churches are often ineffectual and in decline.

## Why?

Crisis forces us to look to God. A lack of resources usually forces us to rely on God's power rather than our programs. The presence of only a few Christians means that cultural and denominational tradition is not as powerful which makes it more likely that the Bible will become the source of our strategy and principles.

What can traditional churches learn from these new movements of God?<sup>1</sup>

While there are many lessons we can (and should) learn, some of the most critical lessons relate to leadership. In barren areas, we are forced to look for laborers in the Harvest, as new believers rise up to lead the way in reaching their own unreached people groups.

A Church-Planting Movement (CPM) is in many ways actually a church leadership multiplication and development movement. The difference between planting churches and seeing sustained movements is usually

linked to leadership development. No matter how many churches are planted, unless the cultural insiders become leaders, the churches will remain foreign and either reproduce slowly or reach a plateau when the initial leader(s) become overloaded.

Victor John is one of the leaders of a massive Church-Planting Movement among the 100 million+ people of the Bhojpuri language group of North India, formerly known as the "graveyard of modern missions." John points out that despite the presence of the church in India for almost 2000 years dating to the Apostle Thomas, 91% of Indians remain unreached with the gospel! He believes this is mainly due to a lack of leadership development.

John states that beginning in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the early Eastern Church imported leaders from the East and used the Syriac language in worship. The Catholics in the 16<sup>th</sup> century used the local language but it was unthinkable to have local leaders. Beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Protestants appointed local leaders but the training methods remained Western and not reproducible by local leaders. "The preparation of indigenous leaders was done with a major conflict of interest. No natives, nationals, or local-workers could ever be called missionaries—this title was reserved for the whites only. These mission organizations focused on the replacement of existing leadership and not on movement or growth."<sup>2</sup>

All too often in our churches today—whether on the mission field or at home—we also focus on replacing existing leadership who will perpetuate the institution, rather than focusing on midwifing God's birth of new disciples and churches. Despite overwhelming evidence that new churches are far more effective in reaching lost people, many churches simply seek to grow larger



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instead of also starting new churches. Seminaries perpetuate this pattern by reinforcing a mind-set of managing existing churches instead of putting an equal or greater emphasis on training students to start new churches. We choose to invest the vast majority of our time and resources into our own comfort, to the neglect of those headed for an eternity in hell. (The average church spends 95% of its budget on its own people.)

As we look at modern CPMs, some clear principles of leadership multiplication and development are discernible. As we look at these principles, it is important to know that leadership development starts from the beginning. The way evangelism, discipleship, and church formation is done *IS* leadership development and sets the stage for on-going leadership development.

**Vision: visionary leadership.** The catalysts of CPMs start with the belief that an entire unreached people group (UPG), city, region, and nation can and will be reached. They ask the question, “What must be done to see a movement started?” Instead of asking “What can I do?” This keeps their focus and the focus of the new believers squarely on God and forces them to rely on God to see the impossible happen. A crucial contribution of these initial outsiders is casting vision to possible partners who will join in the harvest work. For the foreign outsider, it is *critical* to find the near neighbor or inside believers who will rise up and lead the initial efforts to reach the group. As inside leaders emerge and multiply, they “catch” the same God-sized vision.

**Prayer: prayer is the foundation for fruitfulness (John 14:13-14)** One survey of effective church planters in a large CPM found that they were a very diverse group. The main commonality identified was that they all spent 2-4 hours a day in prayer and had special weekly and monthly times of prayer and fasting with their teams. These were not paid ministers; they each had “normal” jobs but they knew that their fruitfulness was tied to their prayerfulness. This commitment to prayer by the planters is absorbed by the new believers.

**Training: everyone is trained.** One woman at an Indian CPM’s leaders training said, “I don’t know why they asked me to speak about church planting. I can’t read and I can’t write. All I can do is heal the sick and raise the dead and teach the Bible. I’ve only been able to plant about 100 churches.” Don’t we wish we were all as inadequate as she is?

In CPMs, the expectation is that everyone will be trained and they are expected to immediately train

others. In one country, when asked to train leaders, we could only meet with 30 leaders due to security concerns. But each week this group trained another 150 people using the same biblical training materials.

**Bible: The training manual is the Bible.** One of the best ways to avoid unnecessary burdens is to use the Bible as the training manual. CPM leaders develop other leaders by helping them become dependent on the Bible and the Holy Spirit, rather than on themselves. When new believers ask questions, the church planter answers, “What does the Bible say?” They then guide them to look at various scriptures and not just their favorite proof-text. It is not that the church planter never exhorts or teaches, but his or her default is to help new believers find the answers themselves. Discipleship, church formation and leadership development are all

AS WE LOOK AROUND THE WORLD TODAY, MOST DYNAMIC CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS ARE STARTING IN AREAS WITH POVERTY, CRISES, TURMOIL, PERSECUTION AND FEW CHRISTIANS. *WHY?*

Bible-centered; this is a key reason disciples, churches, and leaders are so effectively reproduced.

**Obedience: obedience-based (John 14:15).** The biblical training is powerful because it is not just focused on knowledge, but each person is expected to obey what he or she learns. Too many traditional churches primarily emphasize knowledge—leaders are those who have the most knowledge (i.e. education). Success is gathering more members and teaching them more information. In CPMs, the focus is *not on how much you know, it is on how much you obey*. As groups study the Bible, they ask “How will I/we obey this?” The next time they are together, they ask “How did you/we obey?” Everyone is expected to obey, but leaders emerge as those who help others obey. Obedience to the Bible is the fastest path to maturation of disciples and leaders.

**Strategy: the Gospels and Acts provide the main strategy and models.** Not only does the Bible contain commands, but it also contains patterns and models. In the 1990’s, various people working among the unreached were led by God to focus on Luke 10 as a pattern for mission<sup>3</sup> into new areas. Every CPM we know of uses this pattern of outsiders (foreigners or nationals) going out two by two. They go dependently seeking the person of peace who opens their home and *oikos* (family/group), they stay with this family as they share in truth and power, and they seek to bring the whole *oikos* to commitment to Jesus. Since this is a natural group (not an unnatural group of individuals forced



together), leadership is more naturally present and just needs shaping instead of a wholesale transplant.

**Empowerment: people become leaders by leading.** This sounds obvious but it is often overlooked. One example of this is in the Discovery model of CPMs, where the interested *oikos* is invited to study the Bible. A key series of questions is used that will “make disciples” of those studying the story of God from Creation to Christ.<sup>4</sup> In some of these CPMs, the outsider will never ask the questions. Instead he or she will meet separately to coach the insider(s) to ask the questions. The answers come from the Bible, but the question-asker(s) is learning to facilitate the learning and obedience process. An example of this is seen in *Training for Trainers* (T4T) in which each new disciple is taught to share what is learned by training others and thereby growing in leadership ability. The same principle applies as the leadership development process continues: people are given an opportunity to practice and train far more quickly than in most traditional church settings.

**Biblical: biblical standards for leadership.** As leaders emerge and are appointed, biblical standards are used, such as the requirements for new church leaders in Titus 1:5-9 and for established church leaders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. The roles and responsibilities are discovered and applied from a comprehensive study of leadership passages. As they do this, they find that various character elements and skills are required at each stage of the maturing church, and avoid foreign extra-biblical expectations or requirements for church leaders.

**Unbiased: focus on the fruitful (Matthew 13:1-18).** Leaders are not judged on their potential, personality, or style, but rather on their fruitfulness. When CPM trainers are asked how we know who will be fruitful when we first train people, we often laugh. We have no idea who will be fruitful. We train everybody and the unlikelyest are often the most fruitful while the likeliest often don’t do anything. Leaders become leaders by reaching people who become their followers. As these leaders emerge, more time is given to those who are more fruitful so they can produce more fruit. Special training weekends/weeks, annual training conferences, intensive training programs (often mobile) are some of the tools used to keep developing and equipping the fruitful leader, who in turn equips others.

**Shared: multiple leaders (Acts 13:1).** In most CPMs, churches have multiple leaders to ensure more stability as well as to develop more leaders. One key advantage is this allows leaders to keep their existing jobs, thus enabling the movement to spread through ordinary

believers, and avoid crippling dependence on foreign funds. Leadership responsibilities are more manageable with multiple leaders and this also allows for greater wisdom and mutual support. Peer learning and support between multiple churches is also a crucial element in helping individual churches thrive.

**Churches: focus on new churches.** The goal of appointing and developing leaders is to see new churches planted on a regular basis. But this happens organically and naturally. As a new church starts and is full of passion for their new Lord, they are asked to repeat the pattern that led to their salvation. So they begin to look for lost persons in their networks and repeat the same process of evangelism and discipleship that they just experienced and were trained to reproduce. In this process there is often a realization that some leaders are gifted to focus inside the church (pastors, teachers, etc.) and some are gifted to focus outside (evangelists, prophets, apostles). Those inside leaders learn to lead the church to be and do all that a church should be (Acts 2:37-47) both inside and out, while the outside leaders model and equip the whole church to reach new people.

## Conclusion:

What can we learn from God in these new movements he has birthed? Are we willing to let go of cherished cultural and denominational biases and use the Bible as our primary manual for birthing and developing leaders? If we will follow biblical mandates and patterns and avoid extra-biblical requirements for leaders we will see many more leaders emerge and many, many more lost people reached. What a small, small price! Yet, are we willing to make this sacrifice for the sake of the lost?<sup>5</sup>

1. CPMs are just modern expressions like many Christian movements throughout history. They are not something we have rediscovered 2000 years later. The principles have been discovered and forgotten and rediscovered many times. Examples of Christian movements in history include Acts; many peoples of the Roman Empire in the first 200 years of the church; the Church of the East which founded Christian communities stretching from the Mediterranean to China and India; the Irish evangelization of much of Northern Europe in 250 years; the Moravian mission movement; Methodism; the movements that swept through Burmese hill tribes; the last 60 years of the Church in China; and so on.
2. “The Importance of Indigenous Leadership” by Victor John in *The CPM Journal* (Jan-Mar 2006:59-60)
3. Also seen in Mark 6, Luke 9, Matthew 10. This same pattern can be seen in various adaptations in Acts.
4. After asking, 1) What they are thankful for, and 2) What are their difficulties and those of friends and families, they will read the story and have the group retell the story several times, Then they ask 3) what this story teaches us about God, 4) what this story teaches us about ourselves and other people, 5) what they believe God wants them to do in response to it individually and as a group, and 6) who they could tell this story to.

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# OBITUARY FOR THE American CHURCH

MIKE BREEN

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From time to time I will have the people I'm discipling write out their own pastoral obituary. I ask them to write out how our enemy would take them out, rendering them unable to serve their family and communities. As you can imagine, the answers vary, but it always serves as a really helpful exercise as they are forced to confront issues of character, etc.

Taking the same exercise I've used with pastors, for the past year I've been thinking how the enemy would/might be trying to take down the American church. Now what I've noticed is that the original temptations Jesus faced (which can best be boiled down to Appetite, Affirmation and Ambition) are somehow warped and insinuated into the culture. As each culture is distinct and different, a smart enemy would come at each culture in subtle ways, tempting them in ways they don't see or expect, and with things that would look different from culture to culture.

For instance, the issues the European church deals with are actually quite different than the ones the American church is dealing with...even though often times they are put under the same broad umbrella of "Western Church." Sure, there are some similarities, but the attack is different. More nuanced.

But those original temptations of Appetite, Affirmation and Ambition are slowly insinuating themselves into everything we call CHURCH. We just often don't recognize it or see it.

And so this is how, if our enemy gets his way, the American church could be taken out:

A culture of CELEBRITY (affirmation)

A culture of CONSUMERISM (appetite)

A culture of COMPETITION (ambition)

*Mike Breen was the Senior Rector at St. Thomas Sheffield, where he pioneered some very different ways of being the church and when he left it was the largest church in England. He currently leads 3DM, the global home for an organic movement of biblical discipleship and missional church that is centered in the United States. You can access his blog at <http://mikebreen.wordpress.com/>*

## Celebrity

The idea of celebrity is deeply woven into American culture and values. All you have to do is look at the ridiculous nature of Reality TV and you see how Americans are constantly craving celebrity (either to be a celebrity or to find the next celebrity and stalk their every move). Now there is nothing dark or sinister about "celebrity" in and of itself. You can't find an argument that says Jesus wasn't a huge celebrity in his day.

However, there is a difference between being famous and being significant. If Jesus was famous, it's because he was doing something significant. The problem with many pastors is they make decisions, develop personas and define success from the lens of what will make them a celebrity/famous (even if they don't know it or see that they are doing this). So in American church culture, it's pretty easy to become a celebrity: Grow a HUGE church. Now all in all, it's not terribly difficult to grow to be a giant church if you have the right tools at your disposal...but that doesn't mean the ends justify the means of getting there.

For instance, though Jesus was a celebrity in his day, he was willing to say things that ran people off in droves. In fact, the book of Mark chronicles the way (from about the mid-point of the book on) how people left Jesus to where, at the end, virtually no one was left. *No one* wants to be associated with him for fear of the consequences. That's not something you see too often in American churches.

I suspect it's because riven deeply into the American psyche is the desire to be a celebrity. And American pastors are very susceptible to this. Many subtle things happen in people who desire to this kind of celebrity status:

- They can disengage community and isolate themselves, setting themselves up for moral failure.
- They can make decisions that are numbers driven and not always kingdom driven.
- They can skew to a shallow understanding of the gospel as opposed to a holistic one that leads people to discipleship.

- They can put the good of their church (their personal kingdom) over the good of God's Kingdom.

*Question: In what ways are your decisions made by a subtle undercurrent of ambition and a hope for celebrity?*

## Consumerism

We live in a culture that revolves around consuming. Every TV commercial, every store, every credit card company, every bank, every TV show or movie...everything is tailored to fit your desires, needs or personal preference. We are easily infuriated when things don't happen exactly as we want them. We exist in a place that implicitly says this: "We are here to serve you and meet your every whim and desire. Let us take care of you." What's more, it's never enough.

Eventually the house or the car get older and we want new ones. The clothes aren't as fashionable and we want something more in style. That restaurant is getting boring, we must find another. And on and on and on. This is how we are wired to think in the United States. And it is all backed up by this rationale: You're worth it. You deserve to have what you want, how you want it, when you want it. And for the most part, *the church plays the exact same game.*

We do as best we can to provide as comfortable an experience as humanly possible, using every means at our disposal to *attract* them in (and then keep them in). So we tailor what we do around their wants and desires. That's Marketing 101, right? The problem is at the end of the day, the only thing that Jesus is counting is disciples. That's it. He doesn't seem to care too much about converts, attendance, budgets or buildings. It's about disciples. And, by nature, disciples are producers, not consumers.

Yet most of our churches are built around feeding consumers. I'd argue 90% of the church's time, energy and resources are linked to this. But the issue is this: The means you use to attract people to you are usually the means you must use to keep them. In other words, if you use consumerism to attract them to your church, it often means you must continue using it to keep them...or else they will find another church that will meet their "needs." And yet...that consumer mentality is antithetical to the gospel and to the call of Discipleship.

*Disciples aren't consumers, they are producers. Jesus cared about disciples more than anything else.*

*Question: In what ways is your church community using consumerism as the means to draw people to a gospel that is, in and of itself, anti-consumerism?*

## Competition

You will never find a more hyper-competitive culture than you do in the United States. As a foreigner living in this land, I can attest to that with the utmost respect.

Americans love to win, they love the struggle of the journey and love holding up the gold medal of victory. Now don't hear me wrong, there's nothing wrong with being competitive, it's just how competition has become warped and twisted within our culture. And it's that, at least in the church, we are competitive about the wrong things.

Much of the American church finds itself competing with the church down the road. "Are we bigger than them? Do we have more influence than them? Do we have the best/biggest youth group in town?" The fact of the matter is that there is a battle. We do have an enemy and we should be competitive...but against our enemy! What we haven't seen is how crafty he is. This seems to be the alliance he has struck with the American church: "I'll let a good chunk of your churches grow...just not at the expense of my territory." And so what happens? 96% of church growth is due to transfer growth and not churches striking into the heart of our enemy's territory. We'll consider it a win because we have the new service or program that is growing...but that growth is mainly from people coming from other churches. That's not a win! That's a staggering loss. Furthermore, for many pastors, we don't think we've won until we've won *and* someone else has lost. Seriously?! For sure, we have an enemy and we should be competitive, but we should be competing against our enemy, knowing that the final battle has already been won, and not competing against our own team members.

So gifted and skilled is our enemy, so conniving is he, that he has convinced us that beating the people on our own team is victory while he stands back and laughs, rarely having to ever engage in conflict, protecting his territory. He is beating us with a slight of hand, with a clever distraction, turning us against ourselves.

*Question: In what ways are you competing (both in actuality or simply in your mind) against people who are on your own team?*

In all honesty, it isn't that the American church will ever truly die or cease to exist. It will always be there. But it is entirely possible that if these three critical issues aren't addressed and dealt with, it will be a hallow shell that is spiritually listless.

If we think through Celebrity, Consumerism and Competition, the anti-body against all of these is sacrifice: learning to lay down what builds us up and giving to others instead. "Learning to serve, rather than to be served." Looking for anonymity rather than celebrity. To build a culture of producers rather than consumers. To live in a vibrant, sacrificial community fighting a real enemy rather than competing against the same community God has given us to fight *with*. It's about sacrificing what we want for the glory of God and the advancement of His kingdom, regardless of our advancement or desires.

Clearly this is what Paul was getting after in Philippians 2:6-11 when describing the attitude of Jesus as taking on the attitude of a servant, willing to sacrifice all acclaim and equality with God. It was a willingness to set aside and sacrifice celebrity, consumerism and competition at the altar of the incarnation.

Will we have the courage to sacrifice as Christ sacrificed? Will we do the things that cost us so that his Kingdom may advance? <sup>f</sup>

*\*Continued from page 17*

This model stays focused on discipling members to be obedient to what they learn from scripture and the on-going starting of new generations of groups that may become churches. Because the focus is on training all members of the group, the number of leaders in a group tends to multiply quickly, especially as they prove faithful to start their own groups. These leaders typically attend both the group where they are discipled and the group(s) they are discipling.

Many CPM groups continue to meet in homes or convenient locations as house churches. But some small groups go on to become a part of traditional churches or other models of churches. Sometimes several T4T groups will meet together as a larger church for worship while retaining their own small groups. Overall, CPM models tend to increase the number of new house churches while at the same time channeling some new believers into other models of churches.

Another strength of house church and CPM models is that they possess within their DNA very few limiting factors to expand endlessly through a society.

A weakness of the CPM model is that because they are not attractional, these small groups may remain too small at times (lacking some of the basic spiritual gifts needed to be healthy). However, our experience is that despite our best efforts to keep them from becoming attractional, if members are evangelistic, most of these groups will grow both in size and start new groups.

There are many other models of churches. You could probably take some of the drawings and pictures above and using other symbols draw a picture of what your church or network of churches looks like.

### **Choosing a Model to Fit the End-vision**

*Ideally, the model of church you use should be dictated by the end-vision you are trying to reach, not simply because it is the default model you know or have been given. Do you know what the end-vision is that God has for reaching your community?*

Recognizing that most pastors default to the model they know, many of our missionaries and coaches work with them to make gradual changes to their model to fit the end-vision better. We call this the +1 model—helping them take one step forward at a time rather than a drastic overhaul. By helping churches improve their evangelism and discipleship we can help them adjust their model as needed to allow for growth among more people or more communities. Which model they choose can be tailored to better suit who they are as a church and what is needed to reach their current community. Changing is hard work, but often without change there is little growth.

Sometimes a church that wants to grow can only take one step at a time (+1), but sometimes a pastor or a church may jump several steps. Maybe a church will not change its own meeting style and model, but they can greatly benefit the kingdom of God by releasing some of their members or leaders to pursue a very new and different model. The existing church is able to provide spiritual support and a protective covering for these members who pursue a different, cost-effective and people-empowering model. In this situation, a new blended network can develop for the good of reaching the lost.

In church planting we usually are not talking about radically changing an existing church's model. That is very hard work indeed. We tend to focus on those people who want to start new churches or movements. Understanding these different models can clarify what model, or variant of the model they will choose to pursue. Vital to every model is the key person(s) God is calling, who is sold out to the vision and who knows it is what God is leading them to do. Without that clarity there can be confusion, and the leader and followers will often flounder.

Now that you have seen a few different models, think about what cost or expenses are involved in each model. How many years will it take to multiply each model? What are the difficulties in pursuing each model?

What is God's vision for your community? What model will best serve that vision? **Choose your model carefully so it will allow for ever-expanding Kingdom growth.** <sup>f</sup>

# A Day's Visit to the Mazor

Excerpted, by permission, from *Sixteen Seasons: Stories from a Missionary Family in Tajikistan*, by David James (William Carey Library, 2011)

We wound our way towards the famous Muslim saint's *mazor*, his resting place. The landscaping was superb as the caretakers had harnessed the delta of diverging natural springs among the ancient trees and channeled them to water new rows of sapling pines planted neatly between the paths and streams. But I had to wonder if the young trees would get enough sunlight beneath these giants.

Climbing some broad brick steps, we stood together staring at Mazori Sulton Uvais. The great Uvais' bones were housed in this quaint brick building. I immediately began admiring the mazor's beautiful hand-carved wooden windows.

A golden, crescent-mooned dome rested above the entrance. A young mullah, dressed traditionally with a *toki* skull cap and long *joma* coat, sat on a bench, hands outstretched, palms heavenward waiting to receive Allah's blessing as he led a group of pilgrims in prayer. We stopped our chattering and listened to the Arabic mantra. I knew none of our party understood. We stared up at the sycamore trees towering above the dome as we listened to the water rhythms gurgling from the spring. In the low place beside the mazor, pilgrims were gathered along the spring's banks engaged in the rites surrounding the holy water.

In the absence of a golden scoop with a diamond-studded handle, the pilgrims passed along a sun-faded pinkish plastic ladle, sipping the clear water as they prayed along the bank.

Women drank down in the stream beside the men. This would be the closest they would come to the holy bones. Many filled RC Cola bottles with holy water in order to bring home to neighbors or drink themselves later on. Perhaps they hoped the water would battle against a lingering illness.

Though I didn't understand much of what I was seeing, it was clear to me that deep desires were visibly, often with manifest desperation, bubbling up all along the bank. ...

I looked down at Alisher as he knelt beside the spring drinking from the scoop. I noticed no evidence of internal spiritual tension in his expression. Did he not understand

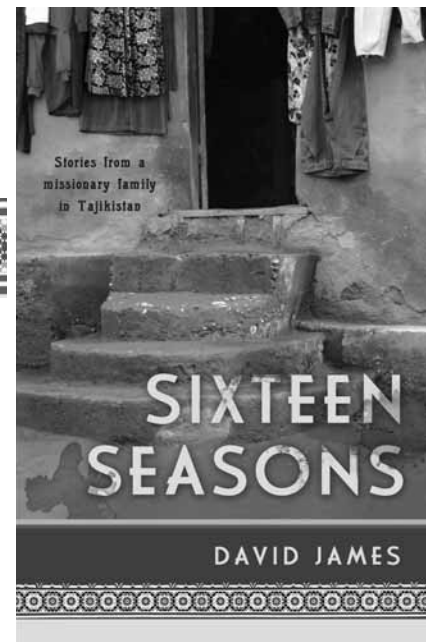
the implications? Was he an exceptionally adept syncretist? Perhaps he was not as serious about the gospel as he had let on. He had never said he believed in Christ but he had been so interested that sometimes I wondered if he was a secret believer. Was he drinking defensively, functionally, or ritualistically? ...

I purchased a copy of the mazor's little white booklet containing the legends about Sulton Uvais. I would spend the next couple weeks of my language lessons pouring over the legends. With the guidance of my perpetually even-keeled language coach, Safar, helping me wade through the literary Tajik and frequent jaunts into mysterious Arabic, I would try to piece together the stories surrounding this place.

I found nothing about Uvais being a sultan. It must be more of an honorary title since he was such a devoted Muslim hermit. It is said that because the Prophet Mohammed lost all his teeth in wars, that Uvais reverently broke out all of his own teeth. Another time, he went and drew water for his blind mother, only to find her asleep when he returned, so he stood next to her holding the water all through the watches of the night until his hands froze to the pitcher. He was ready with the ice water when his mother woke up. I think that story is supposed to be inspiring or convicting or something, but I'm not sure. ...

The other legends in the booklet speak a great deal about fear, slavery to Allah, intense awareness of impending death as close as the beating veins in one's own neck, and the great merit found in living the strict eremitic life. There is precious little of love and relationship and nothing of founded, unbounded grace....

Trying their best to renegotiate their fate, a few pilgrims near the spring were down to their elbows in water attempting to gather holy pebbles. Perhaps they were



hoping to overcome infertility or disease. Perhaps the gathering of real pebbles could somehow bring hope as a physical embodiment of their good works. The eternal scale of judgment is such a powerful metaphor in the Tajik mind. Tajiks believe your life can be represented by that scale. Your good works, like these pebbles, are placed on one side, your evil works on the other. You wait until the end to see which way your life scale will tip, determining your eternal destiny or severity of purgatory.

Soon everyone in our group was finished and we decided it was time for lunch. ...

Our taxi driver found a deep pool in the spring channel running beside our cot. He placed our watermelon there in the cool water. It bobbed beside two other nice melons belonging to fellow pilgrims. I envied the melons and their swim as they bumped and rolled in the pool, their mottled rinds of such healthy green hues, joyfully floating on the clear waters in the dappled shade. It amazes me how a few melons, sunlight, shade, and a spring-fed pool can put the world's best art to shame....

Tajikistan's simplicity has been a balm to my old and infirm fascination. It has revived my ability to wonder, which has been an incredible gift because I feel that this lack of attention, reflection, and therefore wonder is also a struggle in my spiritual walk with God. I find myself drawn repeatedly to Ephesians 3:18-19 with a hunger to awaken to the true dimensions of Christ's love. How wide, how deep! I'm reminded of Jesus' injunction to become like children. Surely our appreciation and capacity for wonder, a wonder we so often abundantly see in children, is something that God desires to revive and sanctify in us since we are created to worship Him. Not simply to believe, but to delight. It is quite difficult for worship to happen with a dead or distracted sense of wonder. I am so thankful for Tajikistan and how it has revived in me the ability to take joy in watermelons. I have been reminded that they are miraculous. I think a long time ago I used to know that....

As we waited for the tea leaves to settle, a shriveled old man hobbled up. Instantly our taxi driver jumped up and helped the man shake his way to a comfortable position up onto the edge of our cot. He looked too weak to try to scoot to a place of honor along the backside, so no one suggested it. Tajikistan is not about activity. There are no to-do lists, but there are plenty of relationships. And the old stranger, welcomed instantly among us as we chatted, was indeed a beautiful thing.

He never spoke and he nodded off at least once, but he seemed happy and proud when I snapped his picture. It would not be ridiculous to think that perhaps this might be one of maybe just a couple of times in his life that he

had his picture taken. He looked like the stereotypical Tajik elder; a round *toki* skull cap sitting atop his ancient shriveled face and a long grey beard hanging down onto his flowing, red-striped *joma* coat. The old man loved our watermelon, which, fortunately for him, was soft enough to eat without the help of many teeth. As we sipped our tea together, I looked at him and wondered if he was alone in the world, sort of wandering around the mazor grounds, eating from the pilgrims' bounty....

Soon the tabak was empty and the strips of roast eaten. The old man led us in enjoying more slices of our spring-cooled watermelon. I was hoping this Tajik elder would be a fount of poetry and traditional stories. Often his generation is the last great source of oral tradition, the remnant displaying the incredible powers of human memorization. The Soviet Union ushered in new times, and it is increasingly difficult to find men of the old ways.

Tajikistan still displays the evidence of an oral culture. They still have the traditional contests in poetry memorization. I heard an example of this in the famous story of how a poor village boy with a great mind is challenged to one such contest by a boy from the great schools in the city. The rules are simple. Whatever letter the last line of the quoted poem ends with, the other person must search his memory to find a poem that begins with that letter. The contest goes on and on until one of the duelers cannot think of a poem beginning with that letter, or a new one of that letter if the letter has been previously used. In the story, of course, the village boy shockingly wins.

To see the way the present generation of Tajiks' eyes sparkle when they tell such stories of dueling poets reveals deep veneration. As long as there is such esteem, the past is not totally gone, but it is an appreciation largely void of imitation. Young Tajiks marvel at the storehouse of their grandfather's knowledge, but they wonder more intensely at television, music, and to a lesser extent books.

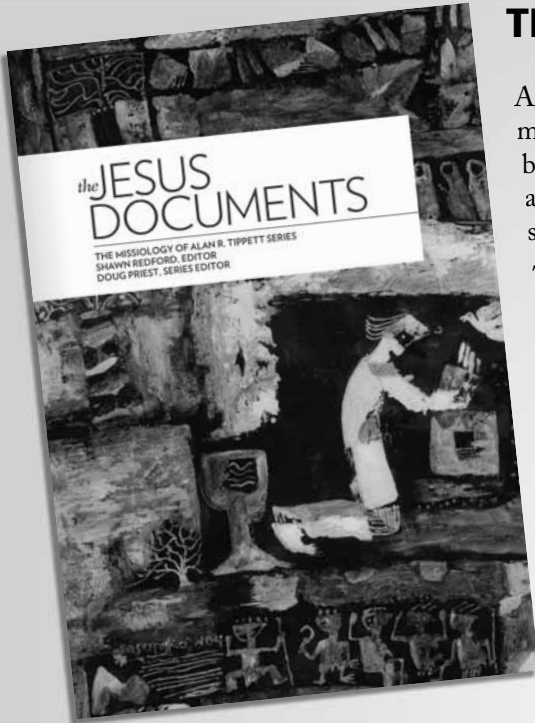
It has been interesting to see the last stand of an oral culture. Sometimes as illiteracy rates, especially in the villages, increase, or when I on occasion meet a Soviet-educated father who can read sitting beside his children who cannot, I wonder if perhaps pockets of oral culture will remain.

But as electricity lines reach ever further out into the countryside, I think even if illiteracy rates rise, traditional Tajik oral culture is gone. Not that I even remotely think that literacy is a bad thing. Absolutely not! It is an incredible gift. But while holding a deep, unshakeable appreciation for literacy, I believe it is still possible to appreciate the aspects of beauty in an oral culture. It is a culture steadily drifting away before us like the dozing old man beside me, the visible manifestation of his dying kind.<sup>f</sup>



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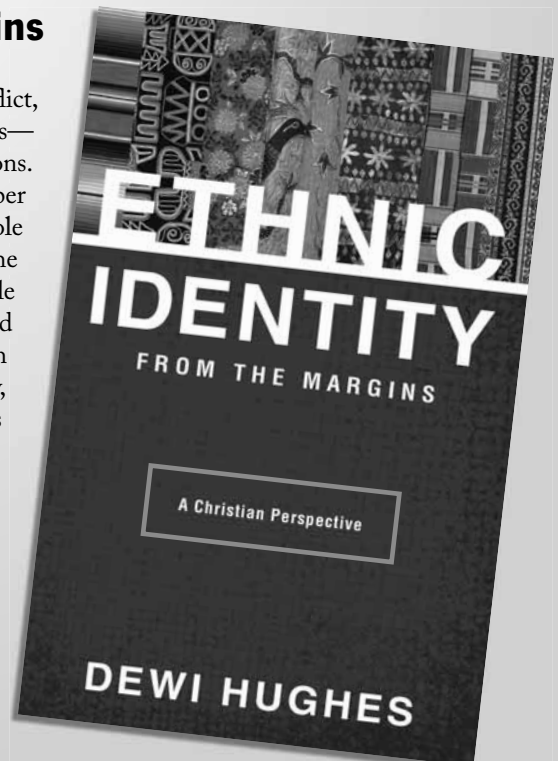
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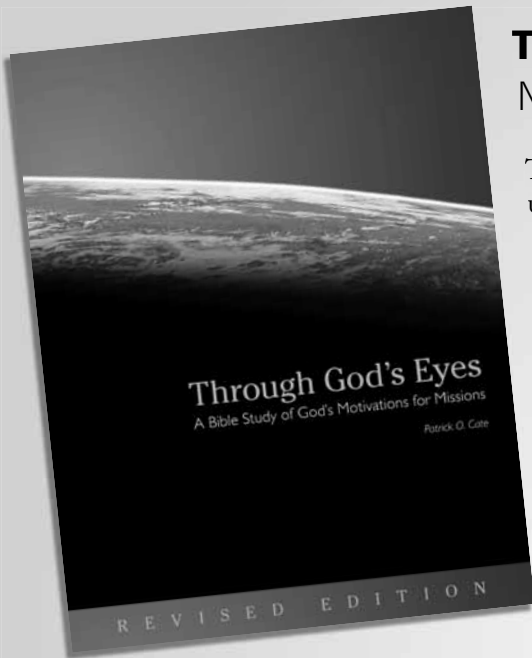
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# Further Reflections



## What are You Hungry For?

Greg H. Parsons, Global Director, U.S. Center for World Mission

**A**nother way of saying that is what are you passionate about?

We often hear people say that they are hungry to see the unreached reached. Or that a specific personal ministry drives your passion. Or that we are hungry for the Lord or His Word.

One way to tell what we are really serious about is to ask: what do we have a strong appetite for? What do we really look forward too? A good friend of mine, who served long-term as a global worker, is battling through cancer as I write. He wrote concerning the pull of our appetites or temptations and how it draws us away from God and His purposes in the world. He wrote:

Several of you have asked how I can see my cancer as a positive good intended by God to be a blessing. One blessing has been the way it has attacked my sinful appetites and cut them to the bone. Here are some examples.

When it comes to the Lust of the Flesh, like many of us, my biggest temptations are food and sex. Sure I'm no glutton, and I've been physically faithful to my wife throughout our married years. But I still fall into times when a craving for food—or a particular food—dominates my mind and my will. I know I shouldn't eat something, but I eat it anyway simply because (to quote Gollum), "We wants it." I know I shouldn't let my eyes and mind linger on that lustful image, but I do because, I deceive myself, "A little eye candy can't hurt anything."

But the cancer has stripped me of all those appetites. Hardly any food can pass my lips without my suppressing a gag reflex just to get it down. The lust of food has become disgusting to me. And the lust for lust? My wife looks as good to me as ever, but sexual images just don't catch

my eye; why waste my attention on anything that's so shallow and in eternity is going to look so disgusting?

What about the Lust of the Eye, those desires to own or possess or delight in something just because it looks good (whether or not it brings any physical pleasure or public recognition). There's never been a whole lot of "Lust of the Eye" temptations that attract me. Cars, houses, stuff—mostly I can just take them or leave them. But golf has become a different story for me. I love hitting a really good golf shot, and will do almost anything to achieve it. Except now. I can't play golf while on my chemo. And while I miss it, I'm reminding myself (of what I really knew all along) of the far richer satisfactions that come in relationships and the joys of God himself.

Then there's the Pride of Life, that desire to be recognized and honored by those around me. I've had to cancel some coming ministry that brings me a great deal of satisfaction (and let's face it, recognition) and I'm now facing months of experiencing very little of what brings me the "strokes" of others. I want to keep doing it all, because I enjoy it, but also (deep down, I have to admit it), I feed off the appreciation that others give me. In this cancer, God is taking those away and saying to me, "Be satisfied in Me alone. Find your joy in Me alone."

I'm still dealing with a host of sinful temptations. But I'm finding this cancer exposing the most insidious in all their ugliness. And I want no part in them.

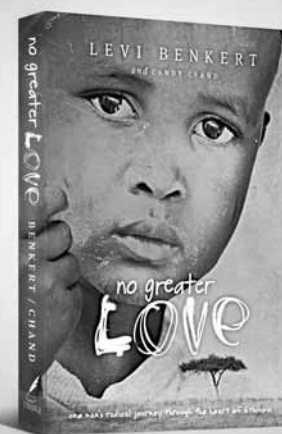
What is the focus of your heart, mind, body, soul? Sure, we have those times we are strong—physically or mentally or spiritually—and our best passion is driving us. But are there times where other things get in the way?

As I thought about my friend's blog post, I was challenged in my own life. Each of us can find things in those three areas that war against what we know is best. As my friend's list notes, they don't have to be bad things or things that are necessarily wrong.

So, how do we focus on God and what He desires?

Why not go to [www.missionfrontiers.org](http://www.missionfrontiers.org), look up this article and post your thoughts? f

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650 languages available or  
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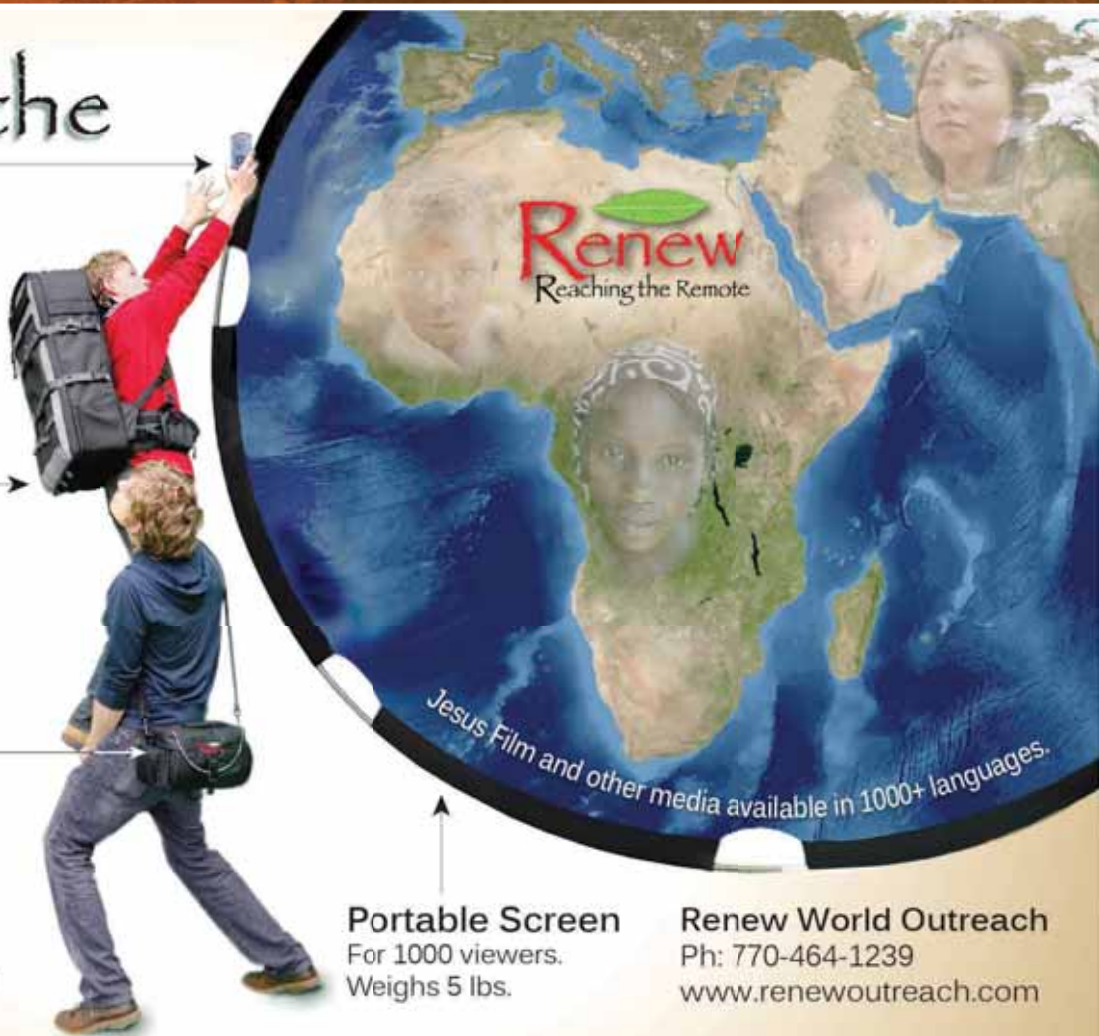
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